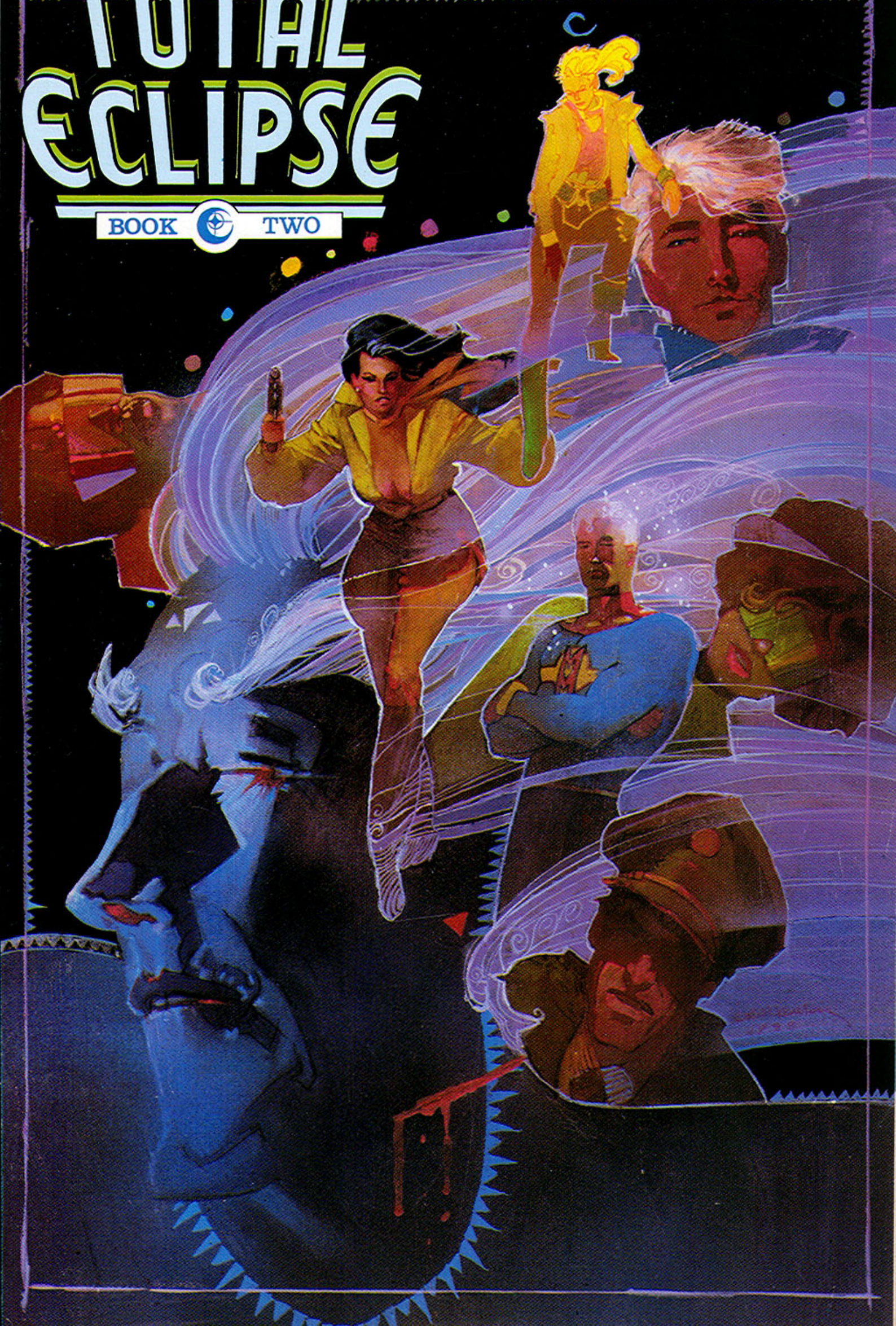


TOTAL ECLIPSE

BOOK



TWO



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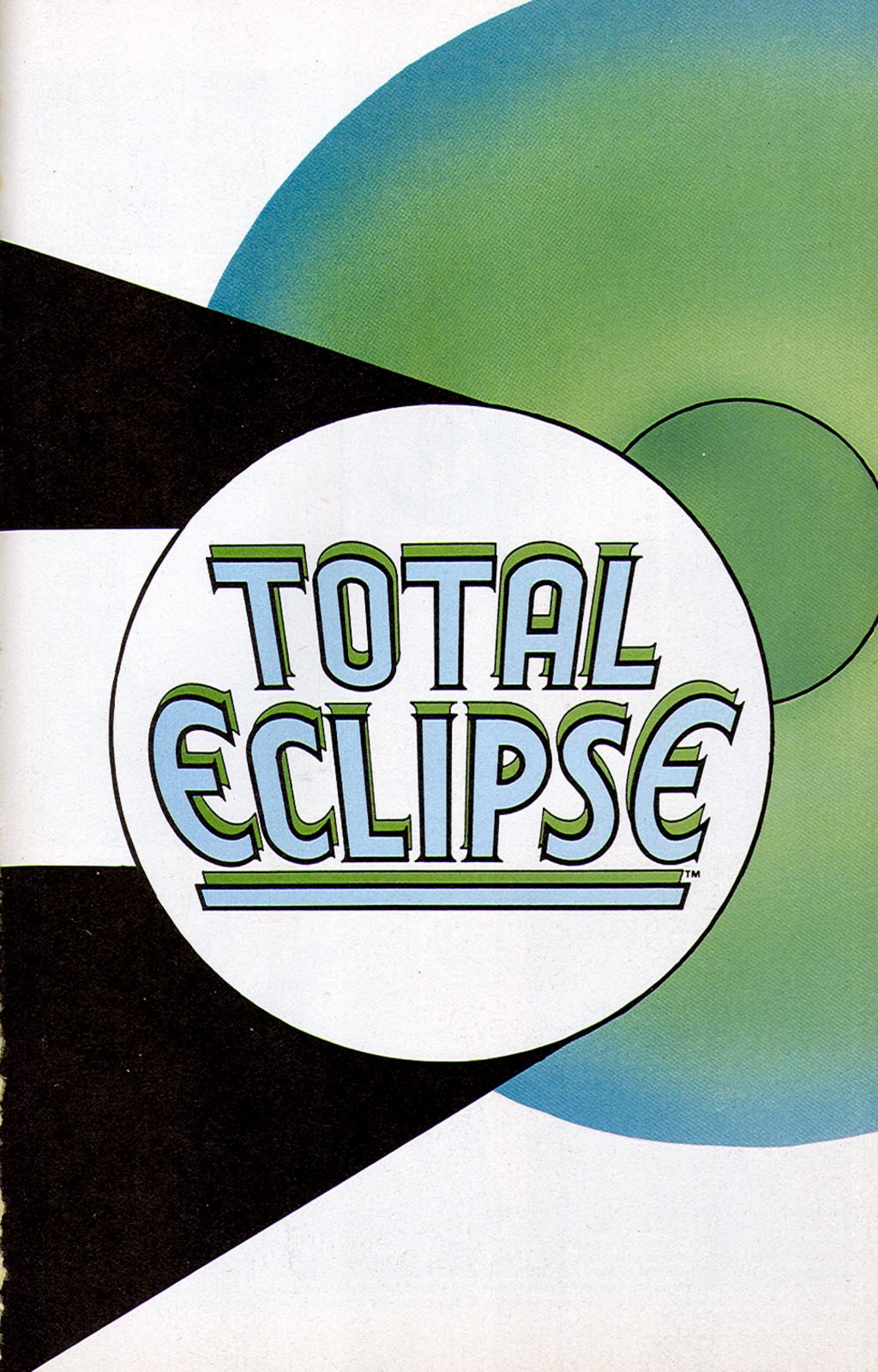
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...I'M FEELING BETTER. I JUST WISH I COULD BE OUT THERE HELPING YOU FIND THE...



...THE THINGS THAT DID THIS TO ME.

BUT UNTIL I'M OFF THESE DAMNED CRUTCHES, I FEEL USELESS.

NO MORE USELESS THAN US, HOLLY.

WE KNOW YOU WERE ATTACKED BY SOMETHING PROBABLY NOT HUMAN.

AND WE KNOW THEY DUPLICATED YOUR LOOKS TO GET THROUGH NELSON AVIATION TO STEAL OUR PROTOTYPE JETS.

BUT WE DON'T KNOW WHO... WE DON'T KNOW WHY.

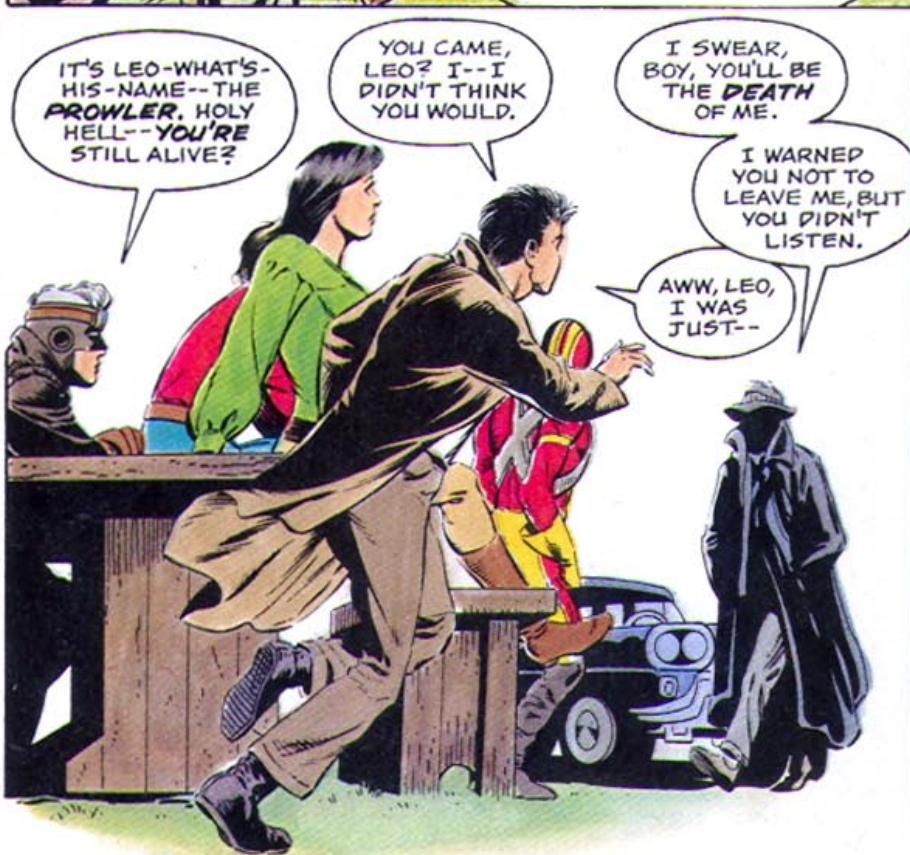
WELL, I'LL LET YOU GUYS FIGURE IT OUT.

THIS ISN'T MY FIGHT.

IT'S EVERYONE'S FIGHT, UPSTART.

NOW, SIT DOWN AND LISTEN.

WE'VE GOT TO DRAFT PLANS.



IT'S LEO--WHAT'S HIS NAME--THE PROWLER. HOLY HELL--YOU'RE STILL ALIVE?

YOU CAME, LEO? I--I DIDN'T THINK YOU WOULD.

I SWEAR, BOY, YOU'LL BE THE DEATH OF ME.

I WARNED YOU NOT TO LEAVE ME, BUT YOU DIDN'T LISTEN.

AWW, LEO, I WAS JUST--



SGT. STRIKE? IT'S BEEN QUITE A WHILE.

I'VE BEEN AWAY.

YOU SEEM NO OLDER.

BUT LET US ALL HOPE YOU ARE AT LEAST WISER.



FROM WHAT I'VE SEEN, WE HAVE OUR WORK CUT OUT FOR US.

HEY, SOMEONE GIMME A CLUE-- WHO IS THIS SCARY-LOOKIN' MOTHER?



I TOLD YOU BEFORE-- SIT DOWN AND SHUT UP.

DON'T MAKE ME REPEAT MYSELF.



UHH... SURE... OKAY.

WH-WHAT-EVER YOU SAY.



I'VE HEARD OF YOU. YOUR MOVIES PLAYED IN GERMANY BEFORE I... LEFT.

AND YOU ARE NO OLDER THAN THE NEWSREELS I SAW OF YOU AT THE TIME. WHAT IS IT WITH YOU AND SGT. STRIKE? DO YOU OWE ROYALTIES TO PONCE DE LEON?



YOU KNOW THIS GUY, SKY?

YEAH, AN' YOUR DAD KNEW HIM, TOO.

HE WAS ALWAYS AN ARROGANT SOB, BUT HE SHOOTS STRAIGHT.

...IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE.



HMPH! NOISY HEROES OF LIGHT! ALL YOU WANT TO DO IS SIT HERE JABBERING LIKE FOOLS! LET US FIND WHAT IS WRONG.



YOU WASTE TIME, IMMORTAL... AND TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE.

TIME IS EVERYTHING.

ZZED, YOU WILL NEED NEW RECRUITS...

YOU WANT TO DIE, ZZED, AND TO DIE--

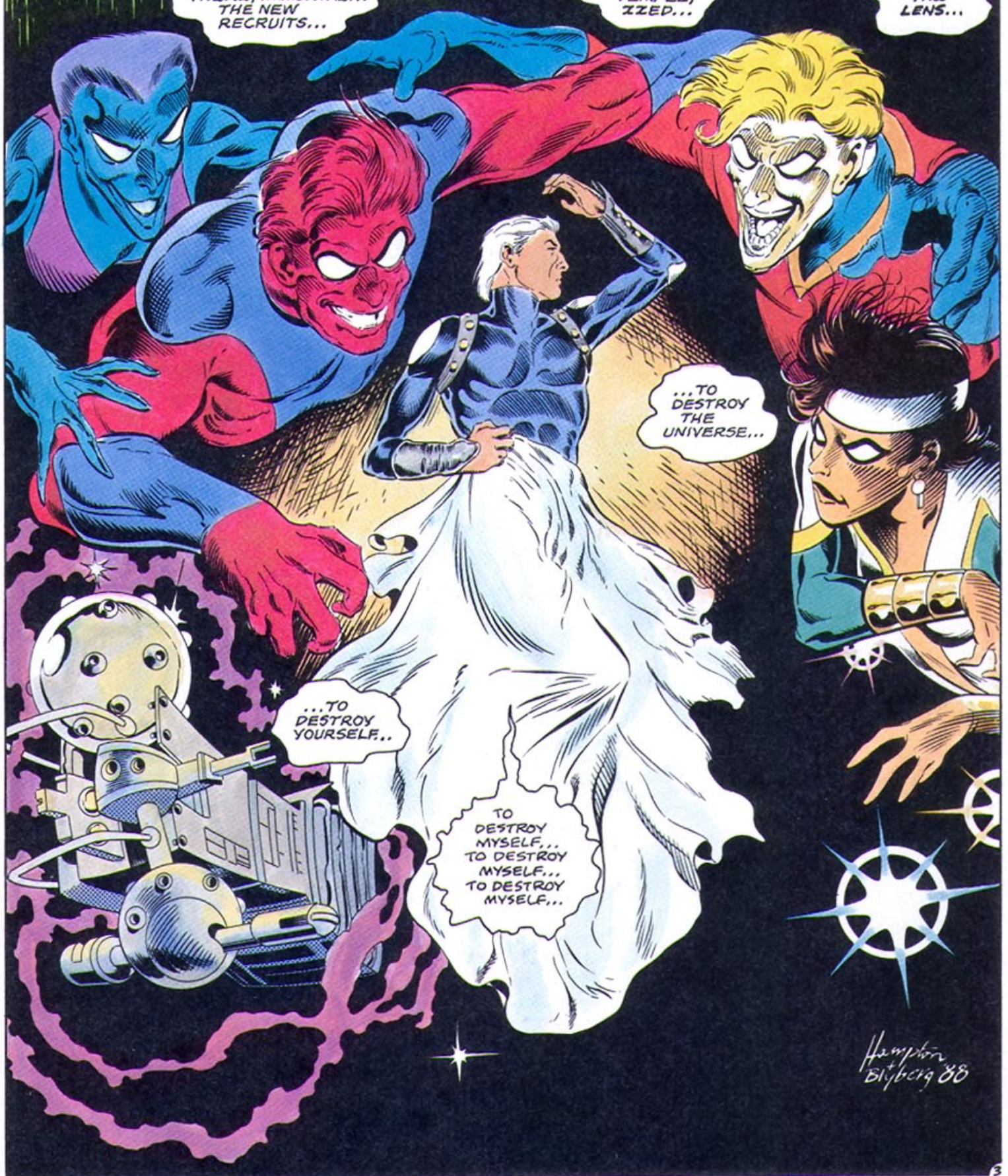
--YOU MUST DESTROY EVERYTHING...

NIGHTMARES

THEY
EXIST OUT
THERE, IMMORTAL...
THE NEW
RECRUITS...

...WITH
POWERS... GREAT
POWERS... TO
SECURE THE
TEMPLE,
ZZED...

... TO
POSSESS
THE
LENS...

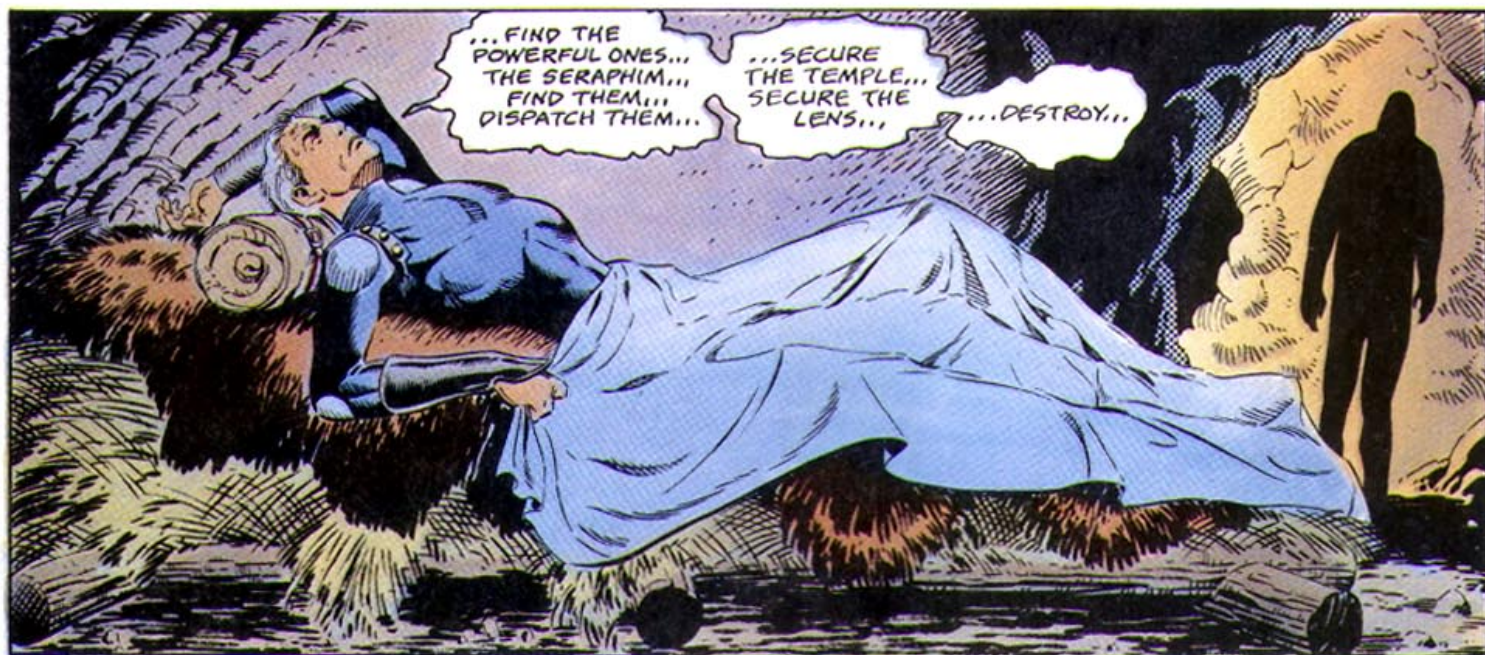


... TO
DESTROY
THE
UNIVERSE...

... TO
DESTROY
YOURSELF...

TO
DESTROY
MYSELF...
TO DESTROY
MYSELF...
TO DESTROY
MYSELF...

Hampton
Blyberg 88



...FIND THE
POWERFUL ONES...
THE SERAPHIM...
FIND THEM...
DISPATCH THEM...

...SECURE
THE TEMPLE...
SECURE THE
LENS...

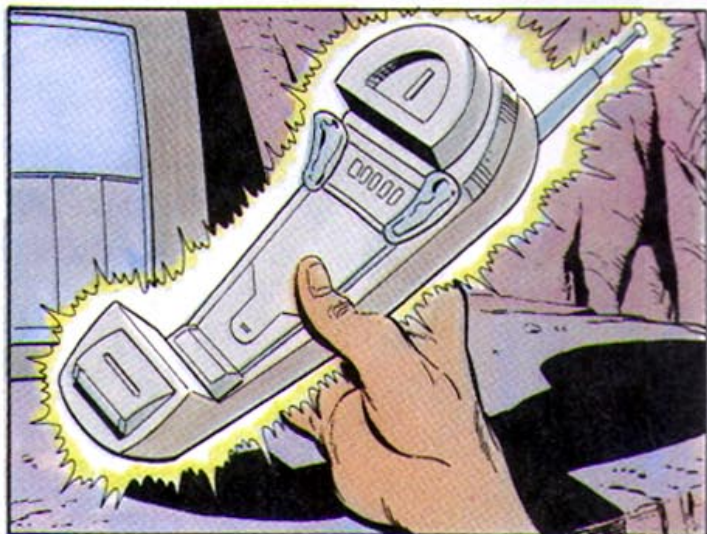
...DESTROY...



DESTROY,
ZZED... DESTROY
YOURSELF. THEN
AT LAST YOUR
IMMORTAL LIFE
WILL END...



... AND
YOU SHALL
REST IN
PEACE FOR
THE REST OF
ETERNITY.



IT IS
DONE.

HE IS
OURS.



...LET
ME DIE...
LET ME
DIE...

NO MORE...
LIFE...
LIFE TOO
LONG...
TOO
LON--



--ANOTHER
NIGHTMARE.

URGING
ME ON... TO
END MY
CURSED IM-
MORTALITY.

SOON...

VERY
SOON.



THE ONES CALLED **THE NEW WAVE** HANDLE THEMSELVES WELL AGAINST THAT... **THING.**

BUT **WHAT** IS IT?

WHERE DO THESE MONSTERS COME FROM? I SENSE SO MANY... **DISTURBANCES** THAT DEFY EVEN MY LOGIC.

AND ANYTHING I DO NOT UNDERSTAND...



... **CON-CERNS** ME GREATLY.



THIS IS **BEYOND** ZZED'S DOING.

HIS EONS ON EARTH DO NOT GRANT THE POWER TO SUMMON THE CREATURES OF NIGHTMARE.



IT APPEARS THAT ALL IS PROCEEDING ACCORDING TO **PLAN.**

BUT THEN I HAD **PLENTY** OF TIME TO MAKE CERTAIN IT WOULD.



FOR ALL HIS KNOWLEDGE AND ALL HIS BRILLIANCE, ZZED IS QUITE THE FOOL.

SO **PROCEED,** IMMORTAL--



--TIME WILL TELL THE VICTOR.

THE
DIE IS
CAST.

THIS WORLD
SHALL MEET
ITS **END**.

AND THE GAME,
AS ALWAYS,
PLAYS ON.

DUTCHMAN,
COME. I HAVE
NEED OF
YOU.

WHAT
TRANSPIRES
HERE REQUIRES
ME TO SEEK THE
ASSISTANCE
OF THOSE WHO
HAVE BEEN MY
ENEMIES.

AS THEY HAVE NEVER
BELIEVED MY DESTINY IS TO
RULE, THEY MOST CERTAINLY
WOULD **NEVER** BELIEVE MY...
SINCERITY IN THIS MATTER.

BUT
YOU,
DUTCH-
MAN--

--YOU
WERE ONCE
ONE OF
THEM.

IF YOU
ATTAIN PROOF
FOR ME OF ZZE'D'S
VILE PLANS...

...I MIGHT
CONVINCE NELSON
AND THE OTHERS
OF OUR **NEED** TO
WORK TOGETHER
IN DEFEATING
THIS **ARROGANT**
FOE.

GO NOW,
PUTCHMAN.

DO AS
YOU HAVE
BEEN
INSTRUCTED.



NELSON
MUST BELIEVE
THIS PLANET'S
VERY EXISTENCE
FORCES OUR
ALLIANCE
IN THIS
AFFAIR.



THE
DUTCHMAN
WILL DO
AS I DEMAND.
WHAT OTHER
CHOICE
HAS HE?

I KNEW IT WAS
PRUDENT TO BRING
HIM HERE ABOARD
THE AIRTOMB THAT
NIGHT HE FIRST
PERISHED.

EVEN
THE DAMNED
HAVE NEED OF
HEROES.



IT IS
TIME ALL
MY
WARRIORS
MET.



AND, SHOULD
THEY PERISH IN
ACHIEVING MY NEEDS,
SO BE IT. THEY ARE
MERELY TOOLS TO
BE DISPOSED OF
ONCE THEY ARE
NO LONGER
USEFUL.

ZZED'S
SCHEME
MUST BE
ENDED, FOR
THERE MUST
ALWAYS BE
MISERY.

SOHO. ONCE IT WAS AFFORDABLE HERE. ONCE THERE WERE ARTISTS WHOSE DREAMS EXCEEDED THEIR SALES.

ONCE THE CLUBS WERE PLACES TO MEET AND TALK FOR HOURS.

BUT THEN IT BECAME TRENDY. THEN IT BECAME EXPENSIVE.



DID YOU WANT SOMETHING?

I BELIEVE WE HAVE MUTUAL NEEDS, SERAPH. PERHAPS WE SHOULD... TALK.



I HARDLY THINK SO. WHAT OF YOURS COULD CONCERN ME?

SERAPHIM OBJECTIVES, FOR ONE.

JACK, C'MON, HE'S CRAZY. WE CAME HERE TO DANCE.

BUT... JACK...

GO AWAY.

YOU'RE BOTHERING ME. GO AWAY.



MAN, YOU THINK YOU'RE SO MUCH BETTER THAN EVERYBODY ELSE!



MY PATIENCE IS LIMITED! YOU HAVE ONE MINUTE.

HADN'T YOU REALIZED-- I AM!



BAYONNE, NEW JERSEY, AND
THE AFTERMATH OF HELL.

WHAT THE
HELL WAS THAT
WE FOUGHT?

I MEAN,
MUTANT CRABS AND
LOBSTERS--I KNEW
JERSEY WAS POLLUTED,
BUT THAT'S
RIDICULOUS.

DOT'S RIGHT.
WHATEVER WAS
DOWN THERE
IS GONE.

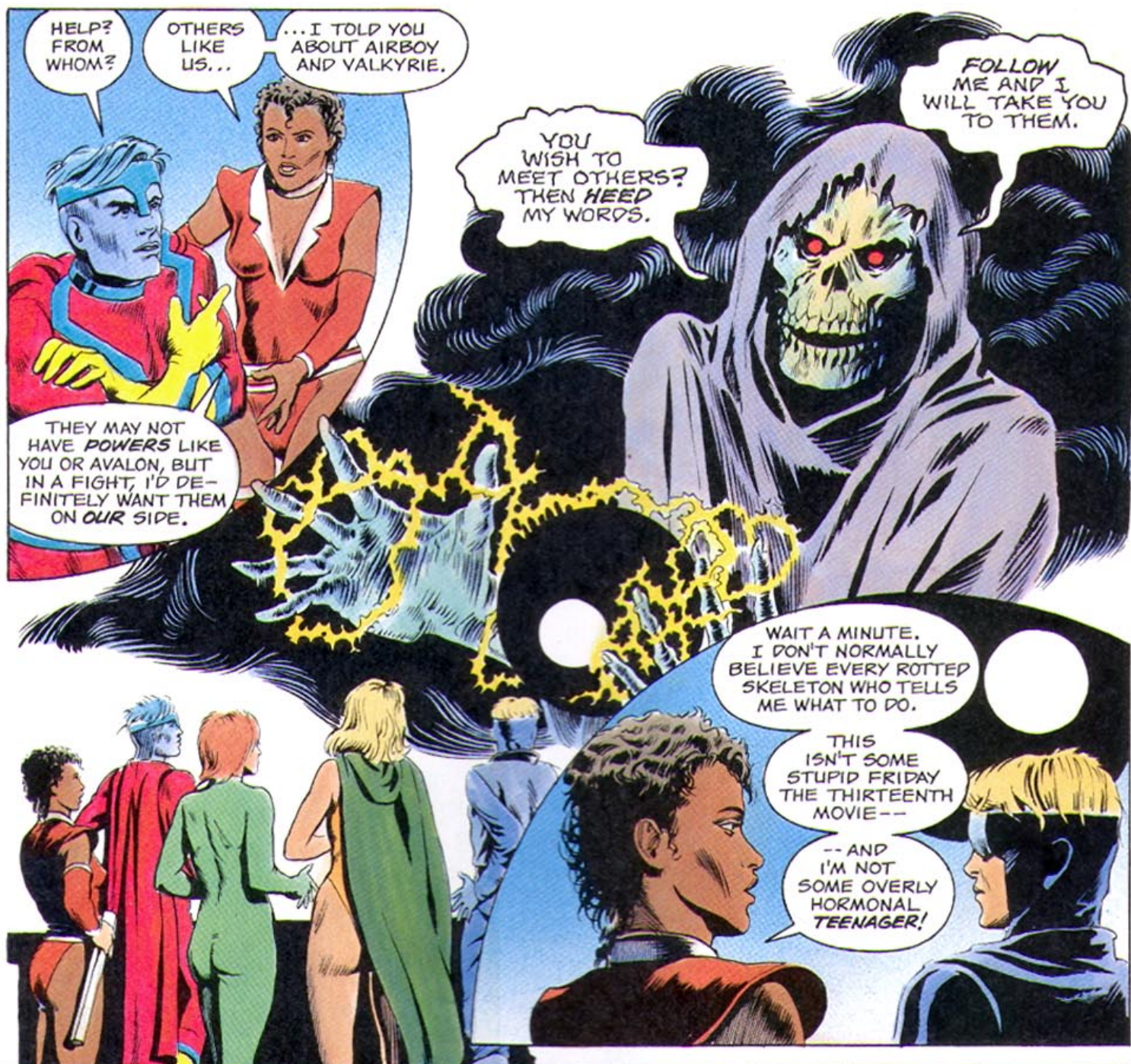
AVALON...
IS THIS MAGICAL
IN NATURE?

ALL'S CLEAR--
NOTHING DOWN THERE
BUT OLD TIRES AND
CONCRETE-BOOTED
GANGSTERS.

NO, I DIDN'T SENSE
ANY MAGIC INVOLVED,
BUT WHAT ELSE COULD
IT HAVE BEEN?

LOOK,
WHATEVER IT IS,
IT'S BEYOND
US.

I KNOW...
AND I THINK
WE NEED
HELP.



HELP?
FROM
WHOM?

OTHERS
LIKE
US...

...I TOLD YOU
ABOUT AIRBOY
AND VALKYRIE.

YOU
WISH TO
MEET OTHERS?
THEN **HEED**
MY WORDS.

FOLLOW
ME AND I
WILL TAKE YOU
TO THEM.

THEY MAY NOT
HAVE **POWERS** LIKE
YOU OR AVALON, BUT
IN A FIGHT, I'D DE-
FINITELY WANT THEM
ON **OUR** SIDE.

WAIT A MINUTE.
I DON'T NORMALLY
BELIEVE EVERY ROTTED
SKELETON WHO TELLS
ME WHAT TO DO.

THIS
ISN'T SOME
STUPID FRIDAY
THE THIRTEENTH
MOVIE--

-- AND
I'M NOT
SOME OVERLY
HORMONAL
TEENAGER!

YOU
SPOKE
OF THE
ONE
CALLED
AIRBOY...

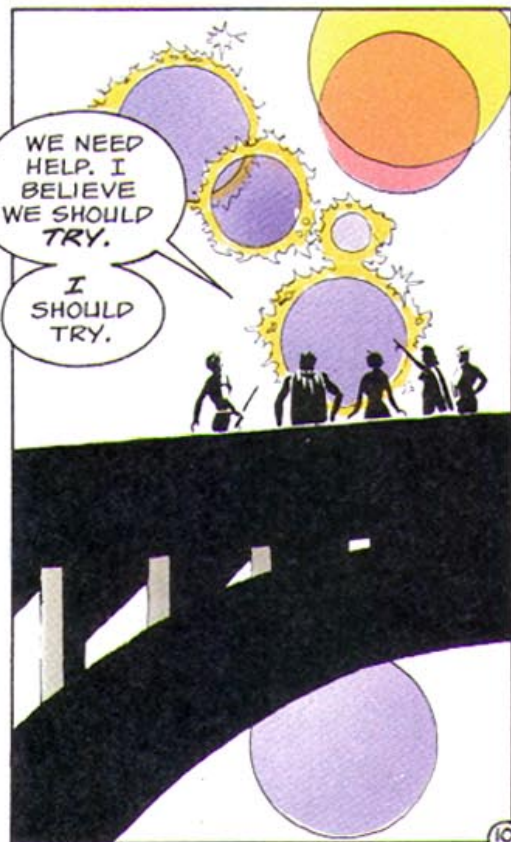
...BELIEVE
ME WHEN
I SAY WE
HAVE **KNOWN**
EACH OTHER
FOR... **AGES.**

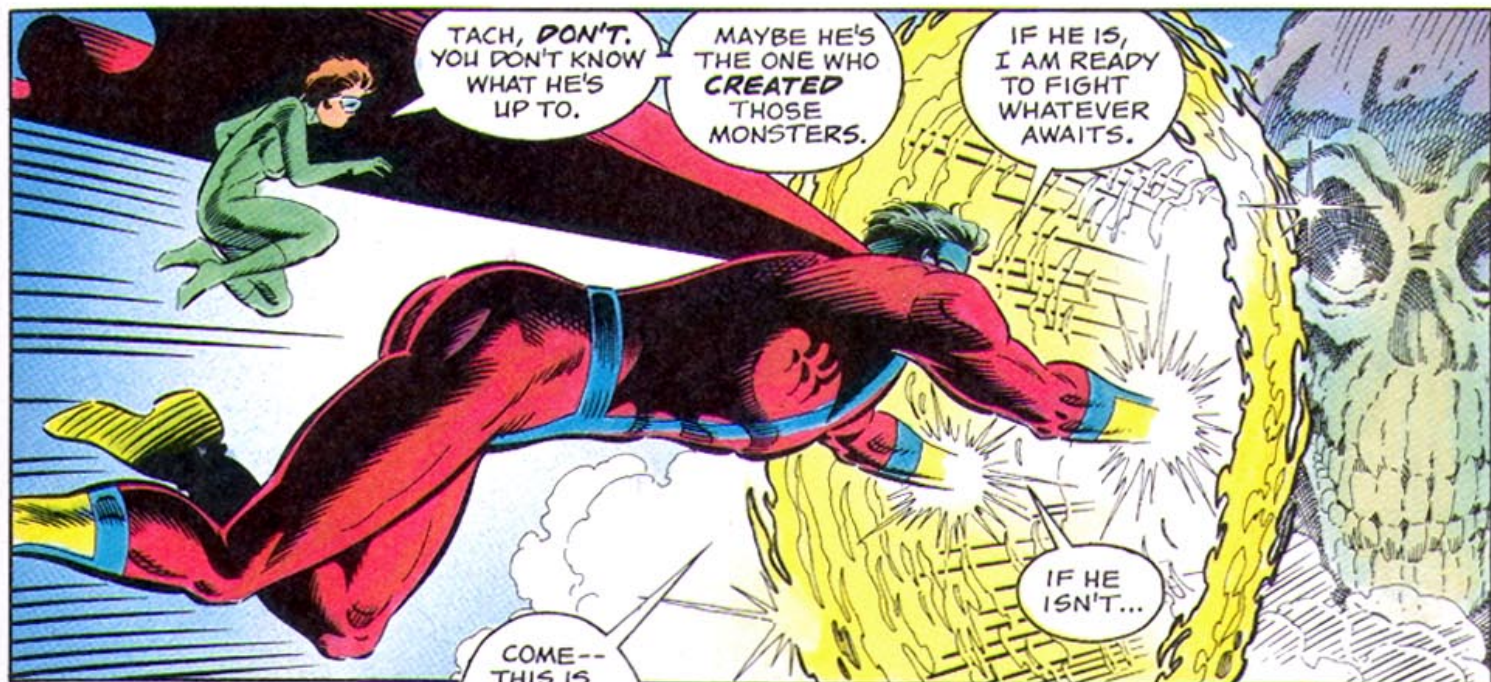
NOW COME
THROUGH THE
PORTAL.

H-HE JUST
OPENED UP
A **HOLE** IN
THE AIR.

WE NEED
HELP. I
BELIEVE
WE SHOULD
TRY.

I
SHOULD
TRY.





TACH, DON'T.
YOU DON'T KNOW
WHAT HE'S
UP TO.

MAYBE HE'S
THE ONE WHO
CREATED
THOSE
MONSTERS.

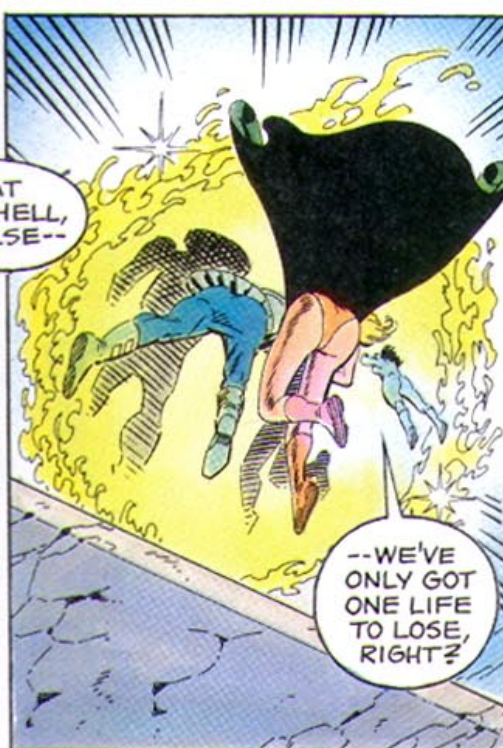
IF HE IS,
I AM READY
TO FIGHT
WHATEVER
AWAITS.

IF HE
ISN'T...

COME--
THIS IS
SIMPLY A
PORTAL...
JUST AS HE
SAID IT WAS.

I
DUNNO.
WHAT DO
YOU
THINK?

WHAT
THE HELL,
IMPULSE--



--WE'VE
ONLY GOT
ONE LIFE
TO LOSE,
RIGHT?



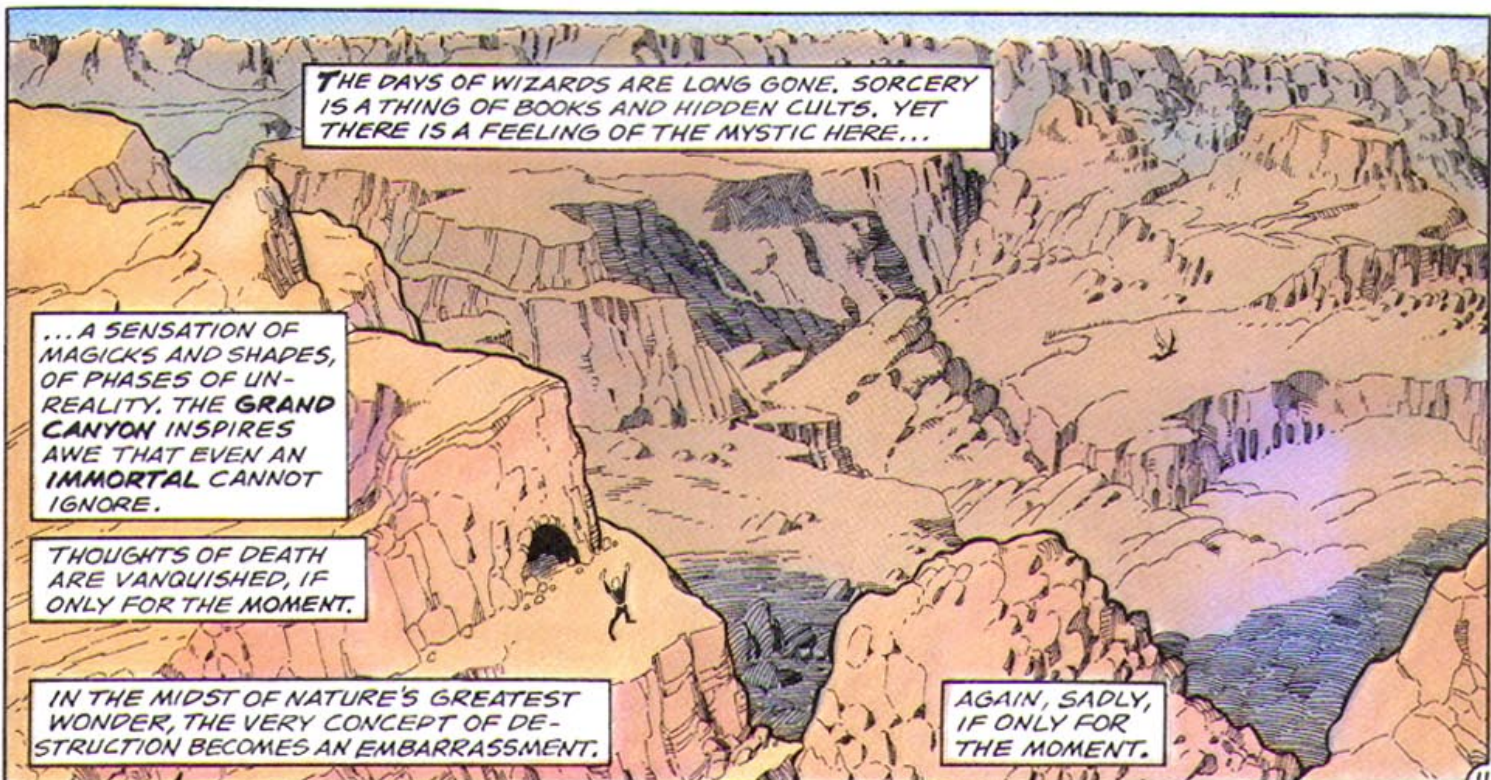
THE DAYS OF WIZARDS ARE LONG GONE. SORCERY
IS A THING OF BOOKS AND HIDDEN CULTS. YET
THERE IS A FEELING OF THE MYSTIC HERE...

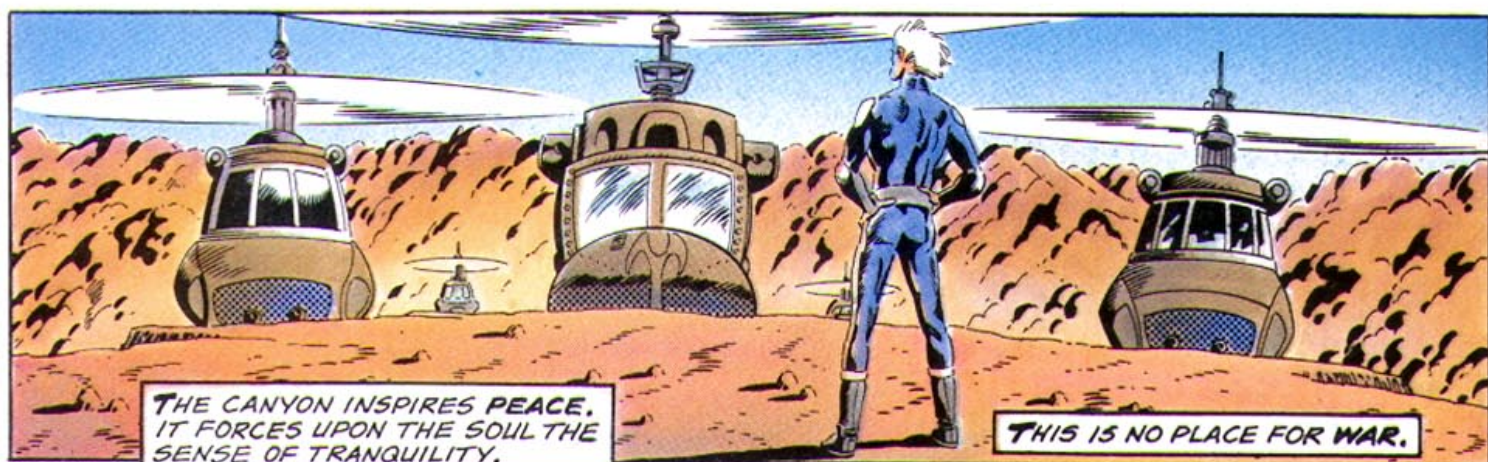
...A SENSATION OF
MAGICK'S AND SHAPES,
OF PHASES OF UN-
REALITY. THE **GRAND
CANYON** INSPIRES
AWE THAT EVEN AN
IMMORTAL CANNOT
IGNORE.

THOUGHTS OF DEATH
ARE VANQUISHED, IF
ONLY FOR THE MOMENT.

IN THE MIDST OF NATURE'S GREATEST
WONDER, THE VERY CONCEPT OF DE-
STRUCTION BECOMES AN EMBARRASSMENT.

AGAIN, SADLY,
IF ONLY FOR
THE MOMENT.





THE CANYON INSPIRES PEACE.
IT FORCES UPON THE SOUL THE
SENSE OF TRANQUILITY.

THIS IS NO PLACE FOR WAR.



BUT THESE OUTCROPPINGS
OF SILT AND LIMESTONE,
OF SANDSTONE AND SHALE,
BLACK VISHNU SCHISTS,
GNEISS AND ARCHEAN
PINK GRANITE HAVE SEEN
MANY WARS BEFORE.

THERE HAS ALWAYS BEEN
A BATTLE HERE AGAINST
UNYIELDING TIME.

THE CANYON IS A BOOK
OF AGES, RESTING HORI-
ZONTAL, AND THE BATTLES
ARE RECORDED ON PAGES
OF SEDIMENT IN FOSSIL-
IZED TYPE.



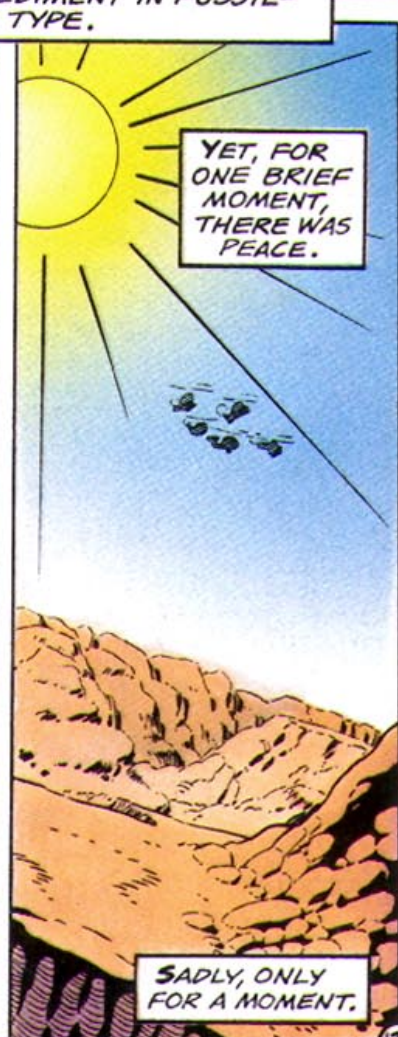
ZZED BREATHES THE
QUICK, KEEN AIR AND
REFUSES TO RELISH
ITS SWEET TASTE.

THE VOICES
AGAIN WORM
THROUGH HIS
THOUGHTS, AND
TRANQUILITY
SHATTERS.



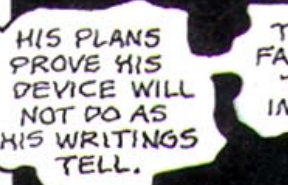
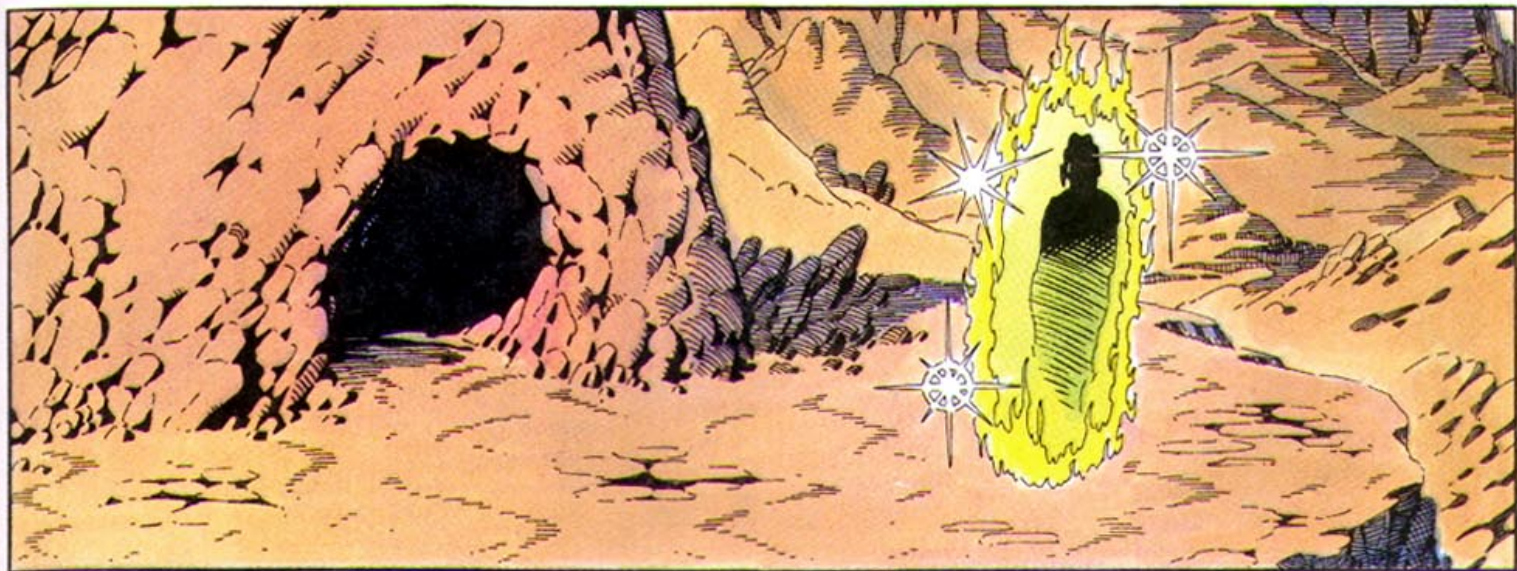
HE NEEDS MATERIALS TO COMPLETE
HIS WORK. HE WILL LEAD HIS DEVIL-
WINGS IN SEARCH. HE TAKES ON A
COMMANDER'S STANCE. HE LETS HIS
EYES NARROW AND FOCUS.

HE HAS HIS
FUTURE TO
WORRY OVER.

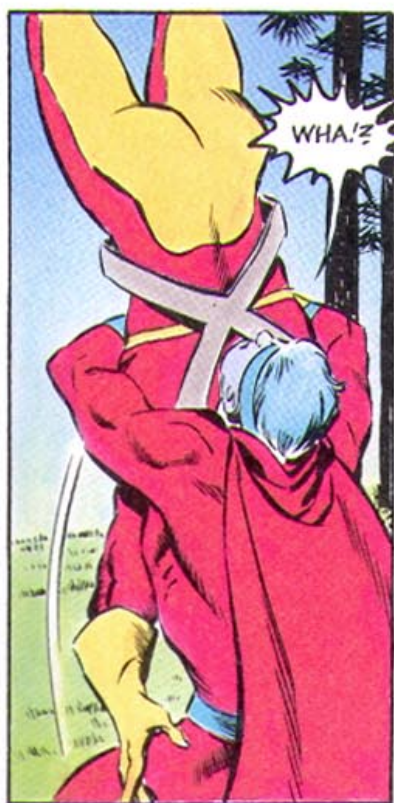


YET, FOR
ONE BRIEF
MOMENT,
THERE WAS
PEACE.

SADLY, ONLY
FOR A MOMENT.







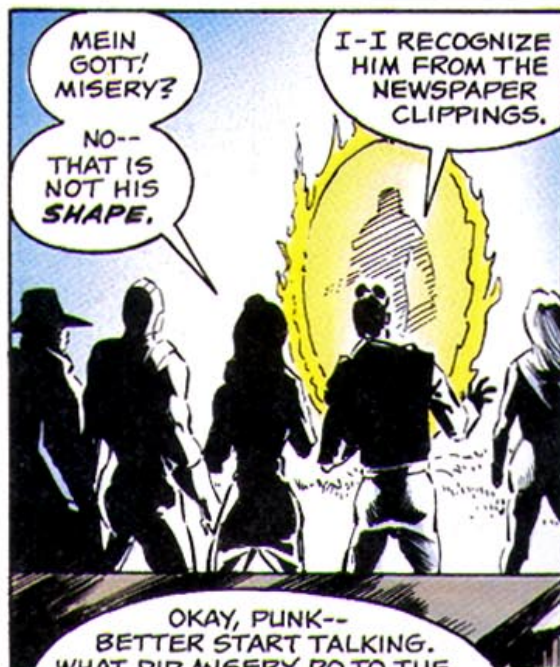


OKAY, WE'LL TALK. BUT I WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU WERE DOING IN ONE OF MISERY'S PORTALS!

MISERY? IS *THAT* HIS NAME?

HE *BROUGHT* US HERE TO FIND YOU.

I NEEDED YOU ALL TOGETHER, NELSON.



MEIN GOTT! MISERY?

NO-- THAT IS NOT HIS *SHAPE*.

I-I RECOGNIZE HIM FROM THE NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS.

OKAY, PUNK-- BETTER START TALKING. WHAT DID MISERY DO TO THE DUTCHMAN? HE MAY HAVE BEEN STRANGE, BUT HE FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT. HE DIDN'T DESERVE *THIS!*

IF YOU WANT *ANSWERS*, BIRD-HEAD, GET YOUR DAMN HANDS OFF ME!

WE TOLD YOU, WE'RE NOT WITH THAT MISERY WHATEVER HE IS. WE FOUGHT SOME *CREATURES*, THEN WE SUDDENLY FOUND OURSELVES HERE.



I AM GLAD YOU KNOW OF ME, NELSON. THERE ARE URGENT MATTERS TO DISCUSS... A GREAT DANGER.

LISTEN TO THE ONES I BROUGHT TO YOU.



WOLF, LET HIM GO.

I TOLD YOU-- I BATTLED VARIOUS *MONSTERS* MYSELF.



GOTT! GOTT! YOU DIED... SO MANY YEARS AGO. WERE YOU MISERY'S PRISONER ALL THIS TIME?

HOLY HELL! THE POOR BASTARD!



THEN WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON?

WHAT IS AT STAKE, PILOT-- IS THE FATE OF THIS UNIVERSE.

AND TO *PREVENT* ITS DESTRUCTION, WE MUST BAND TOGETHER.

THE VILLAIN IS NAMED ZZEP, AND IT WAS HIS WARRIORS WHO STOLE YOUR AIRCRAFT.

HE BUILDS MACHINES TO ENCRIRCLE YOUR WORLD. MACHINES AT ONCE SCIENTIFIC AND ARCAIC. TO SUCCEED, HOWEVER, HE MUST STEAL PARTS FROM A GOVERNMENT LAB, HIDDEN IN THE BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS. YOU AIRFIGHTERS MUST GO OUT TO STOP HIM.

WAIT A SECOND, DUTCHMAN, I--

NELSON-- BE SILENT. ZZEP HAS ALSO LIED TO CREATURES CALLED THE SERAPHIM, TOLD THEM HE SEEKS ONLY TO DESTROY THE EARTH. THE SERAPHIM ARE POWERFUL, AND THEY HAVE BEEN SENT TO CONTROL A MYSTIC GEM ATOP AN AZTEC TEMPLE NEAR MEXICO CITY. I WILL SEND THE HEAP...

...BUT THERE ARE OTHERS YOU CAN USE--THEY CALL THEMSELVES THE LIBERTY PROJECT.

I KNOW THE PROJECT. I MET ONE OF THEM.

BUT THIS IS ALL SO CONFUSING... HOW CAN WE TRUST ONE OF MISERY'S OWN?

I DON'T LIKE ANYTHIN' THAT SMELLS OF SCUM, AND THIS STINKS LIKE A MARRAKESH outhouse.

THIS MISERY GUY BROUGHT US HERE JUST LIKE HE SAID. THE MONSTERS WE FOUGHT WERE REAL! WE HAVE TO TRY.

I'LL DO IT. ONLY, WHEN I'M DONE-- I'M GOIN' TO GET BACK THE DUTCHMAN.

AND THEN I'M GONNA KICK MISERY'S SKINNY BUTT FROM HERE BACK TO HELL.

ALL RIGHT. VAL AND I WILL GET THE PROJECT AND SEND THEM OFF TO STOP THE SERAPHIM. SKY, YOU GET THE PLANES OUTFITTED AND FIGURE OUT HOW TO GET TO THAT LAB-PLACE. WE'LL REJOIN YOU AS SOON AS WE CAN.

YOU GOING TO BE OKAY, SKY?

WHEN I GET BACK THE DUTCHMAN.

THEN, YEAH.



THE LIBERTY PROJECT IS STILL IN PRISON.

I KNOW...

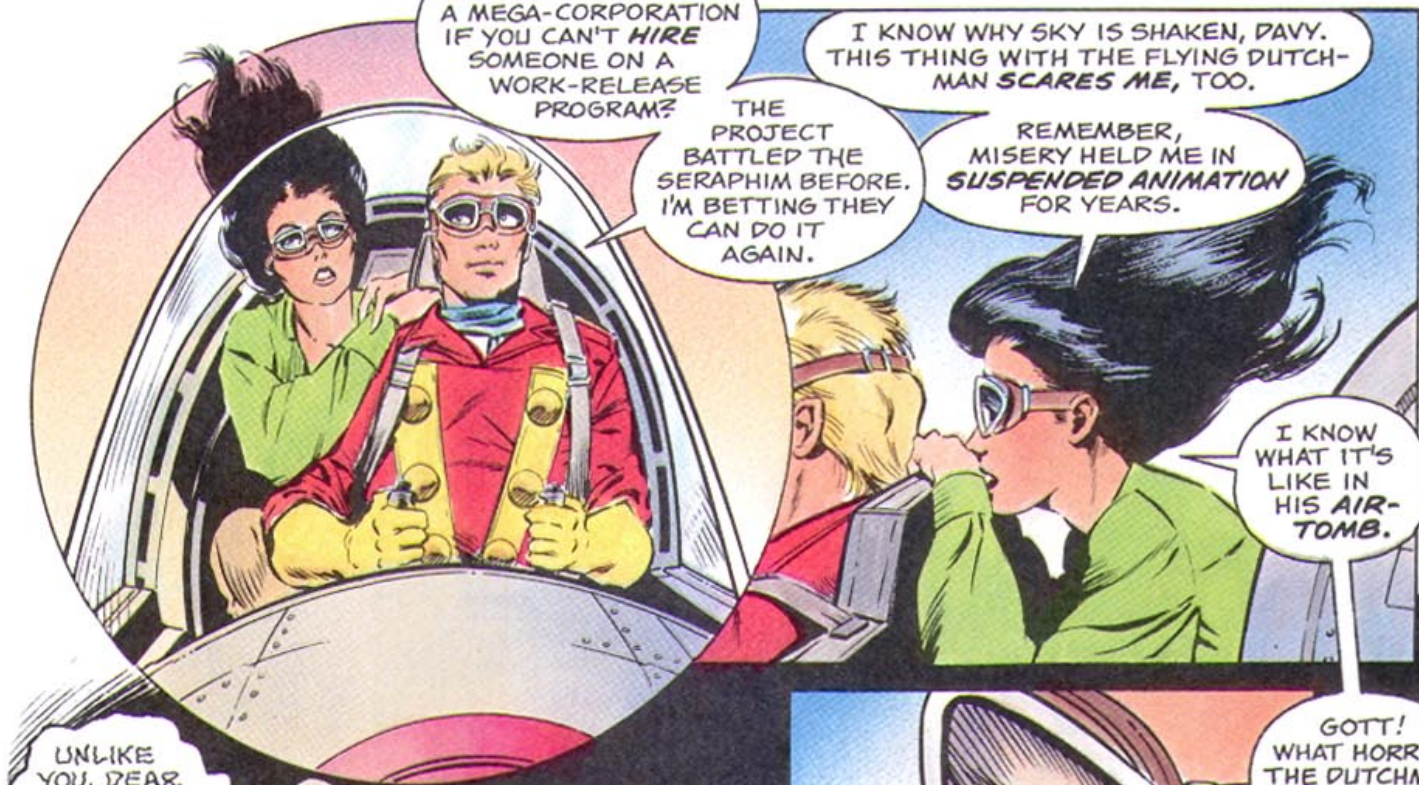
...BUT WHAT'S THE GOOD OF OWNING A MEGA-CORPORATION IF YOU CAN'T **HIRE** SOMEONE ON A WORK-RELEASE PROGRAM?

THE PROJECT BATTLED THE SERAPHIM BEFORE. I'M BETTING THEY CAN DO IT AGAIN.

I KNOW WHY SKY IS SHAKEN, DAVY. THIS THING WITH THE FLYING DUTCHMAN **SCARES ME**, TOO.

REMEMBER, MISERY HELD ME IN **SUSPENDED ANIMATION** FOR YEARS.

I KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE IN HIS **AIR-TOMB**.

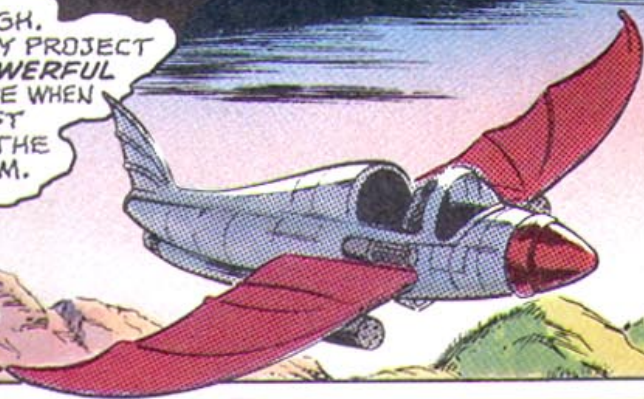


UNLIKE YOU, DEAR VALKYRIE, IT IS A HORROR OF HIS OWN CREATION. NOW HE **WILLINGLY** OBEYS MY MEREST WHIM.

AS WILL YOU AND NELSON... ONE DAY SOON.

BUT ENOUGH. THE LIBERTY PROJECT IS NOT AS **POWERFUL** AS THEY WERE WHEN THEY LAST BATTLED THE SERAPHIM.

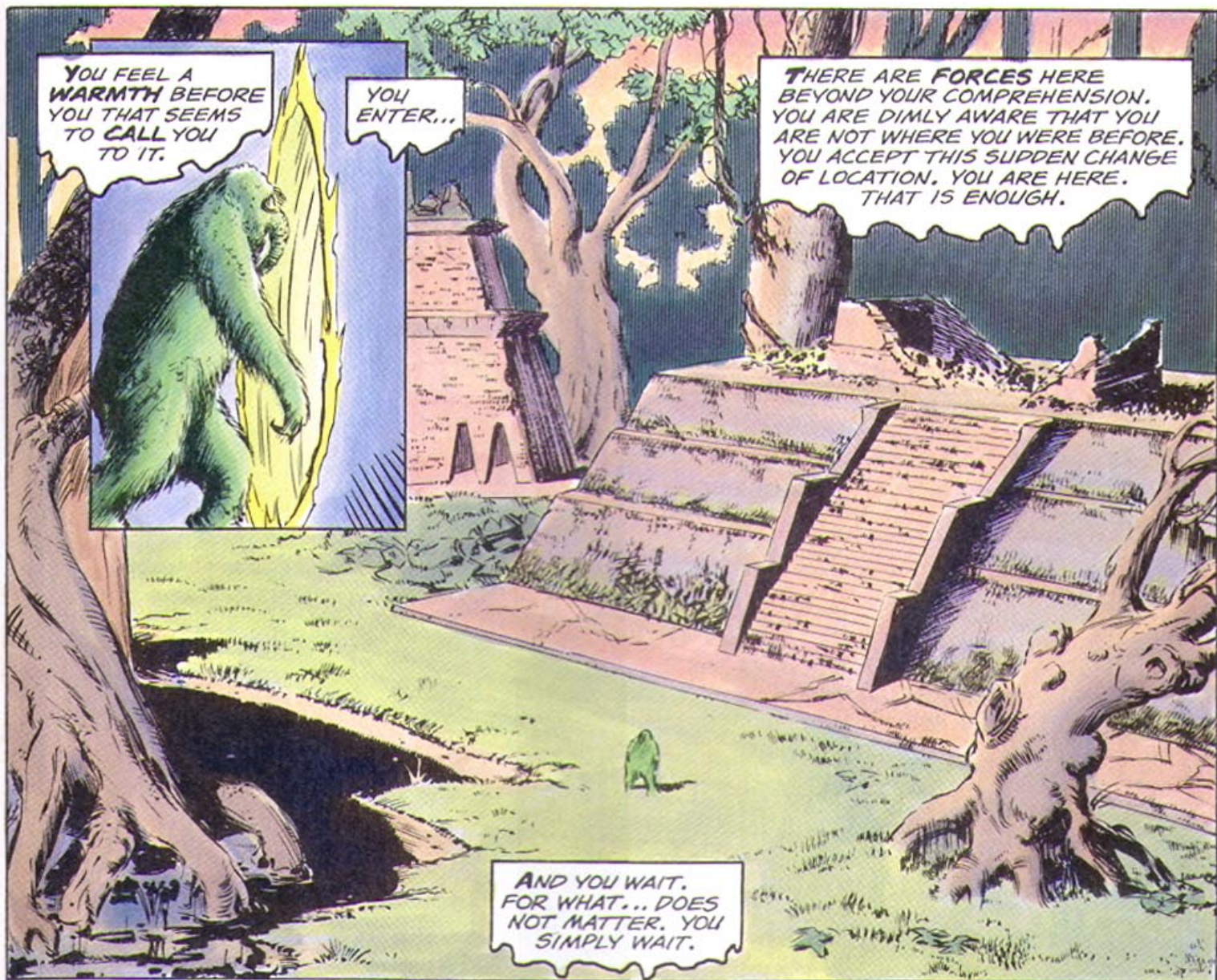
GOTT! WHAT HORROR THE DUTCHMAN MUST BE SUFFERING.



I PROMISED NELSON **ASSIS-TANCE**.

RAW, BESTIAL STRENGTH, IN A NEAR **MINDLESS** FIGHTING MACHINE.

YES, THE HEAP WILL DO QUITE WELL.

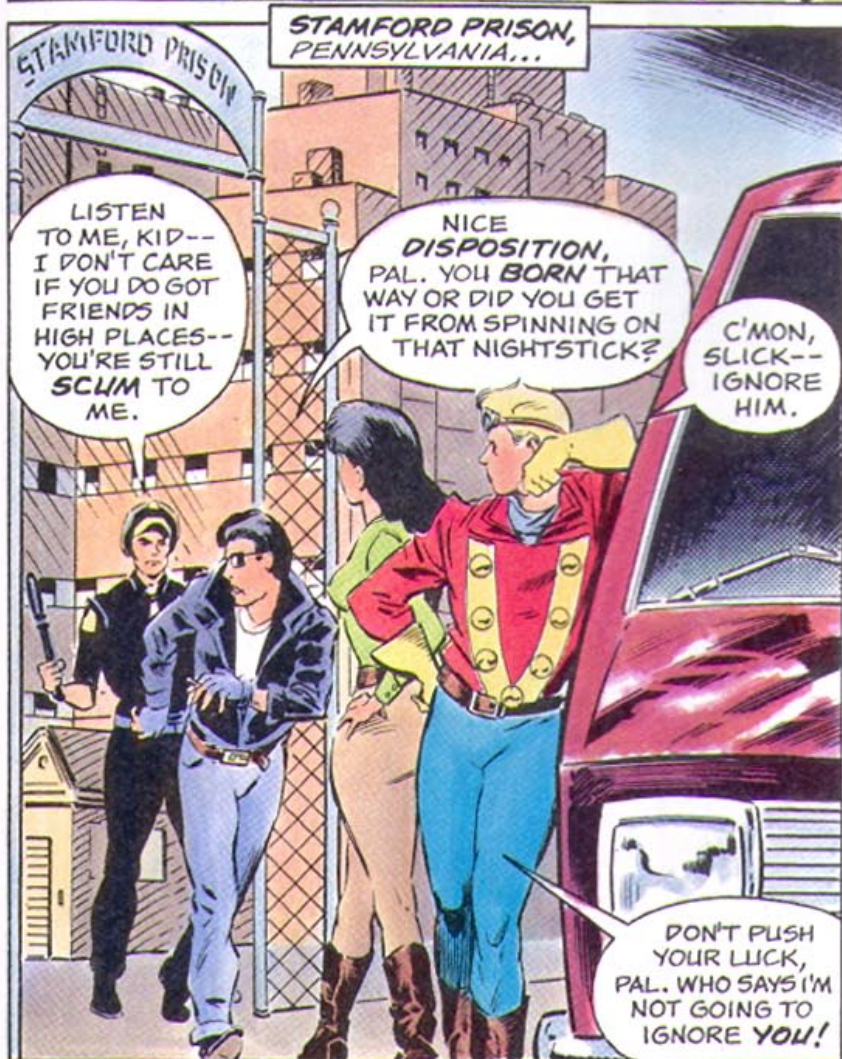


YOU FEEL A
WARMTH BEFORE
YOU THAT SEEMS
TO CALL YOU
TO IT.

YOU
ENTER...

THERE ARE FORCES HERE
BEYOND YOUR COMPREHENSION.
YOU ARE DIMLY AWARE THAT YOU
ARE NOT WHERE YOU WERE BEFORE.
YOU ACCEPT THIS SUDDEN CHANGE
OF LOCATION. YOU ARE HERE.
THAT IS ENOUGH.

AND YOU WAIT.
FOR WHAT... DOES
NOT MATTER. YOU
SIMPLY WAIT.



STAMFORD PRISON,
PENNSYLVANIA...

LISTEN
TO ME, KID--
I DON'T CARE
IF YOU GOT
FRIENDS IN
HIGH PLACES--
YOU'RE STILL
SCUM TO ME.

NICE
DISPOSITION,
PAL. YOU BORN THAT
WAY OR DID YOU GET
IT FROM SPINNING ON
THAT NIGHTSTICK?

C'MON,
SLICK--
IGNORE
HIM.

DON'T PUSH
YOUR LUCK,
PAL. WHO SAYS I'M
NOT GOING TO
IGNORE YOU!



WELL, WELL, THE
GANG'S ALL HERE.

HOW HAVE
YOU BEEN,
SLICK?

CRACKSHOT,
BURNOUT AND CIMARRON.
NELSON'S GOT MORE PULL
THAN I THOUGHT.

COULD'A
BEEN
WORSE,
PAL.
COULD'A
BEEN
MUCH
WORSE.



... ANYWAY, THAT'S WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING. WE REALLY NEED YOU.

I CAN SEE. I JUST DON'T KNOW IF I WANT TO BE SHOT AT ANYMORE. WHY BOTHER?

IT DOESN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE TO ME.

BUT I'M GLAD TO SEE THE REST OF YOU ARE ALL RIGHT.

YEAH, YEAH--YA KNOW YOUR PROBLEM, FLAT-TOP? YOU GOT **WIMP** OOZING OUT OF YOUR EARS.

ME, I WANT OUT AND I DON'T WANT BACK IN AGAIN-- EVER! IT SUCKS IN THERE.



I'M JUST GLAD YOU **BELIEVED** IN ME, VAL. GLAD SOMEONE DID.

BUT SLICK'S ON THE MONEY-- WE'VE BEEN RUN **ROUGHSHOD** OVER--

--SO WHY SHOULD WE HELP NOW?



YOU SAID IT, CIMARRON. YOU WANT US, HERE'S OUR TERMS-- NO SUPERVISION. THE NECK THINGS GO.

AND WE'RE NOT WEARING ANY **UNIFORMS**. GOT IT?

I DON'T THINK THAT WILL BE ANY PROBLEM. SO YOU'LL HELP?



FOR NOW, ANYWAY, YOU GOT YOURSELF SOME PART-TIME AND VERY **TEMPORARY** GOOD GUYS.



MORE TEMPORARY THAN YOU MIGHT THINK.

THE SOUTHERN APPALACHIANS ARE BLUE-GREEN FISTS THRUST THROUGH CLOUDY PUFFS OF SMOKE. WELL-FORESTED, EXTENDING FROM NORTHWESTERN VIRGINIA TO NORTHEASTERN GEORGIA, THE BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS ARE A "SCENIC WONDERLAND."



TOURISM, HOWEVER, IS NOT THE REASON ZZED'S DEVIL-WINGS HAVE JOURNEYED HERE.

SCI-PLEX 3

DEEP WITHIN MAJESTIC GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN...



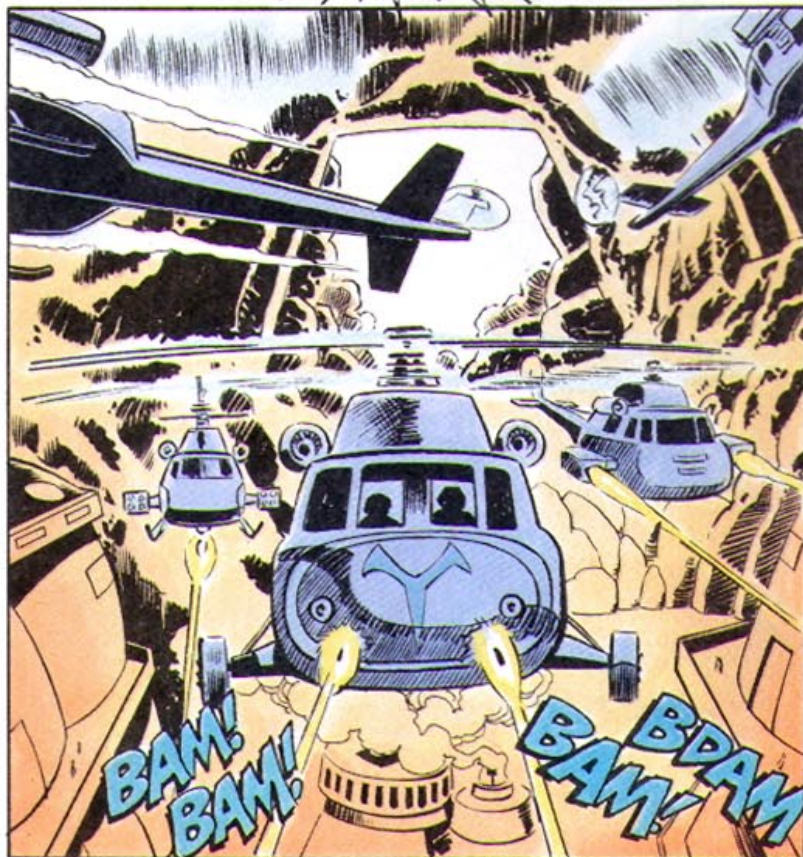
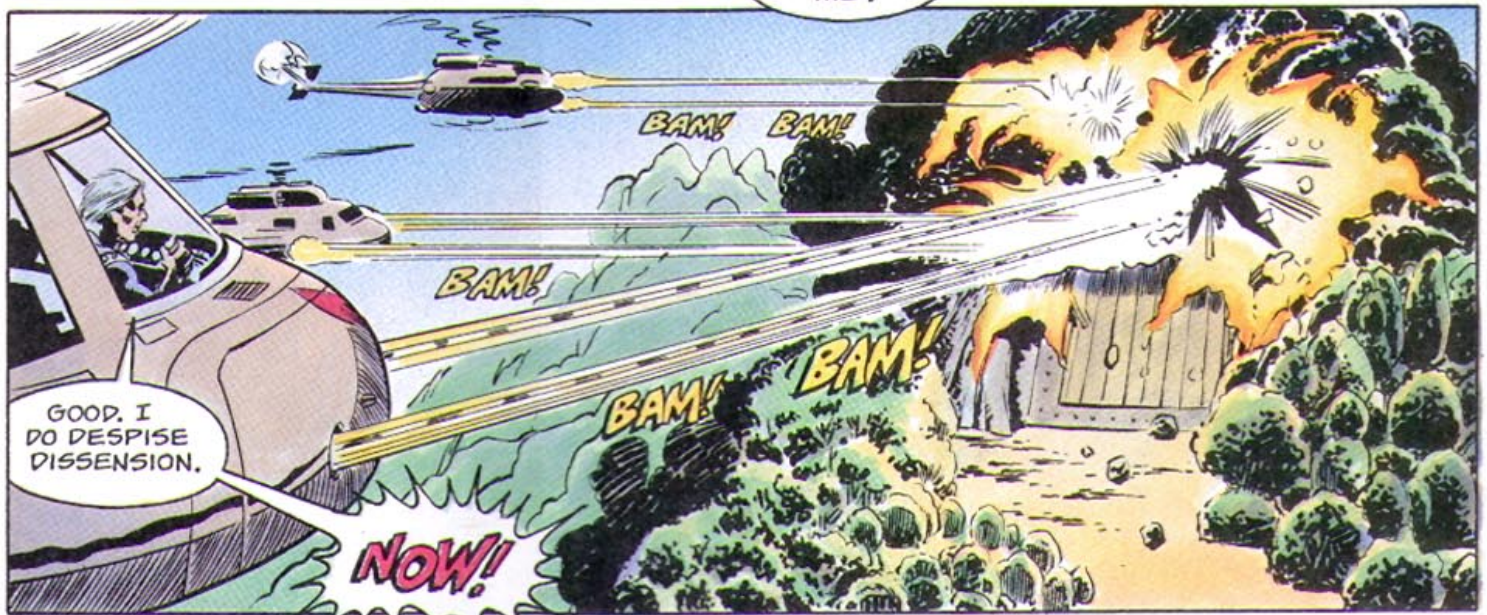
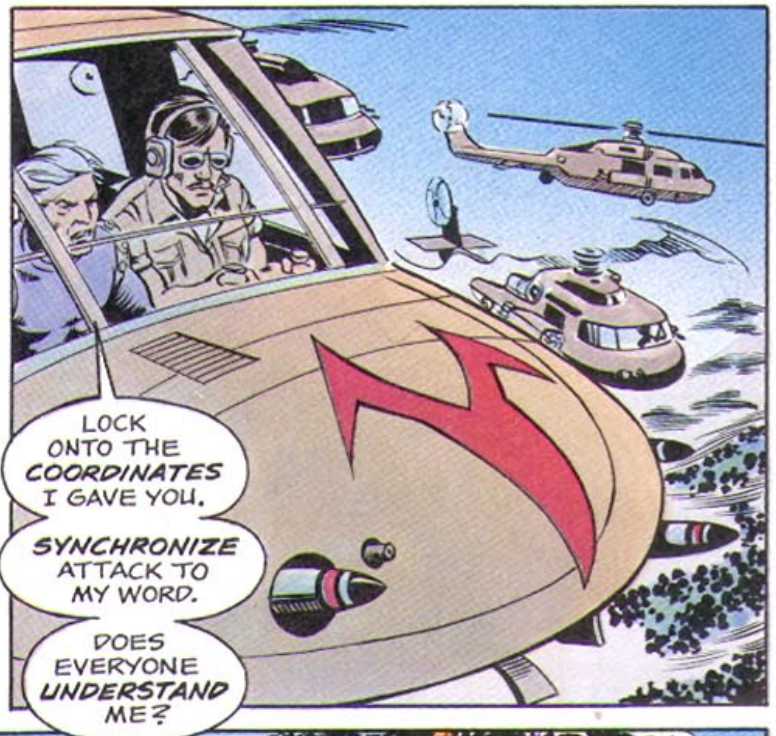
THIS IS WHAT I CALLED YOU ABOUT, DR. TANNER--

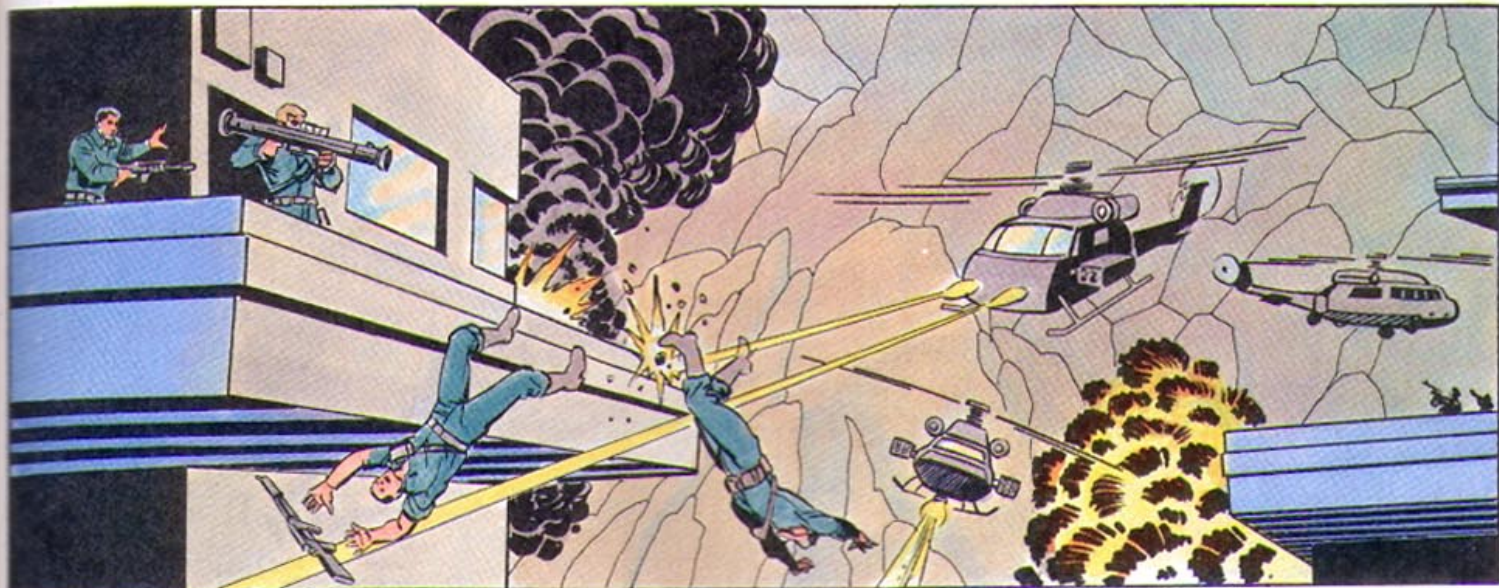
--THERE'S ABOUT A HALF DOZEN OF 'EM... HEADING OUR WAY.

THEY'RE NOT EMITTING SECURITY CODES?

NOT A ONE, SIR.

DAMN! HOW DID THEY FIND US?



A man with glasses and a mustache is shouting into a telephone receiver. He has a look of extreme stress and urgency. In the background, another man in a suit is visible, looking concerned.

SIR, WE NEED GOVERNMENT TROOPS...WE'RE NOT EQUIPPED TO HANDLE A FULL-SCALE INVASION!

TELL ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW. RED ALERT!

SECURITY!

Two men are inside a vehicle. The man on the left is driving, looking determined. The man on the right is wearing a headset and looking out the window.

LET THE OTHERS FIGHT.

WE GO FOR THE GOLD!

An aerial view of a battle. Several helicopters and jets are engaged in combat over a rocky, mountainous landscape. One helicopter is shown in a steep climb, while others are in various positions of maneuver.

THERE THEY ARE. C'MON--

--LET'S KICK SOME ASS!

A group of superheroes, including a woman in a blue and white suit and a man in a red suit, are flying through the air. They are heading towards a group of people standing on a platform in the distance.

THERE ARE SIX HELICOPTERS.

LET US STOP THEM BEFORE ANYONE ELSE GETS HURT.

HIT THE LEAD COPTER! TRY AND CONFINE THEIR FLYING SPACE.

A green helicopter is flying over a city. It is being pursued by several smaller, orange-colored helicopters. The scene is filled with action and movement.

DAMN! HOW DID I LET MYSELF GET TALKED INTO THIS, BOY?

YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE OF US WHO KNOWS HOW TO FLY!

DON'T REMIND ME!

Three men are inside a vehicle. The man on the left is wearing a red mask and a green vest. The man in the middle is wearing a blue hat and a blue jacket. The man on the right is wearing a brown jacket and a brown hat.

I SWEAR, I'LL GIVE MYSELF A STROKE BEFORE THIS IS DONE.



MOVE IN FAST--
THEN BANK OUT.
WE'RE NOT TRYING
TO BE **HEROES**.

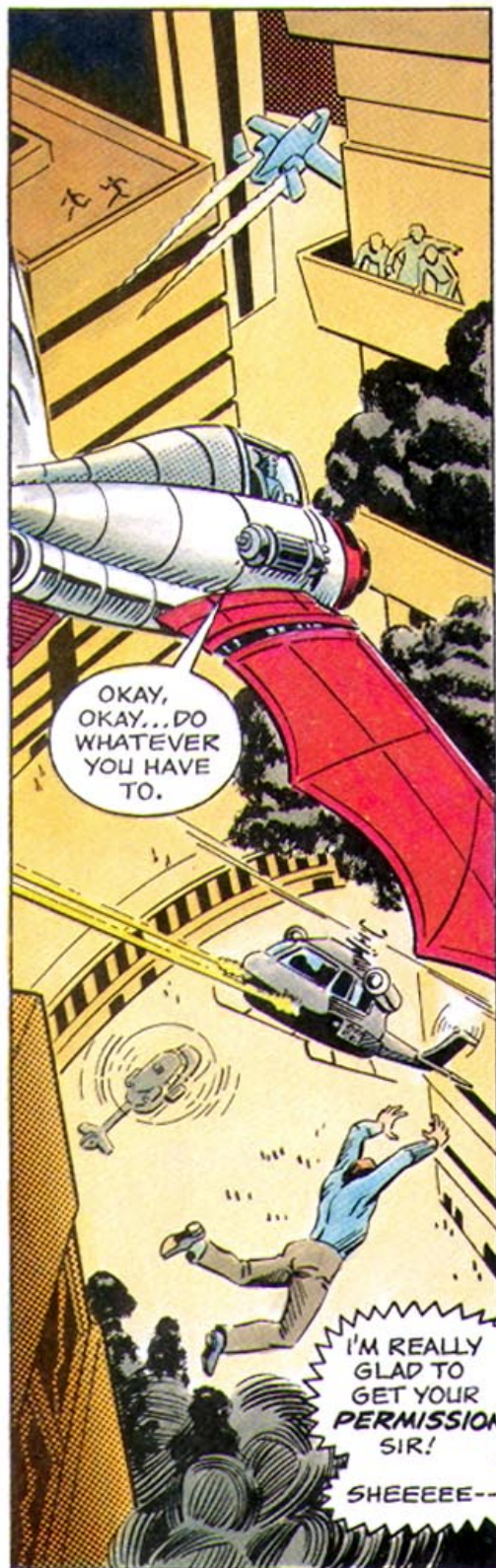
REALLY?
THEN WHAT
THE HELL
ARE WE
DOING
HERE?



IF WE'RE JUST
SPINNING OUR
WHEELS HERE,
I WANT OUT!



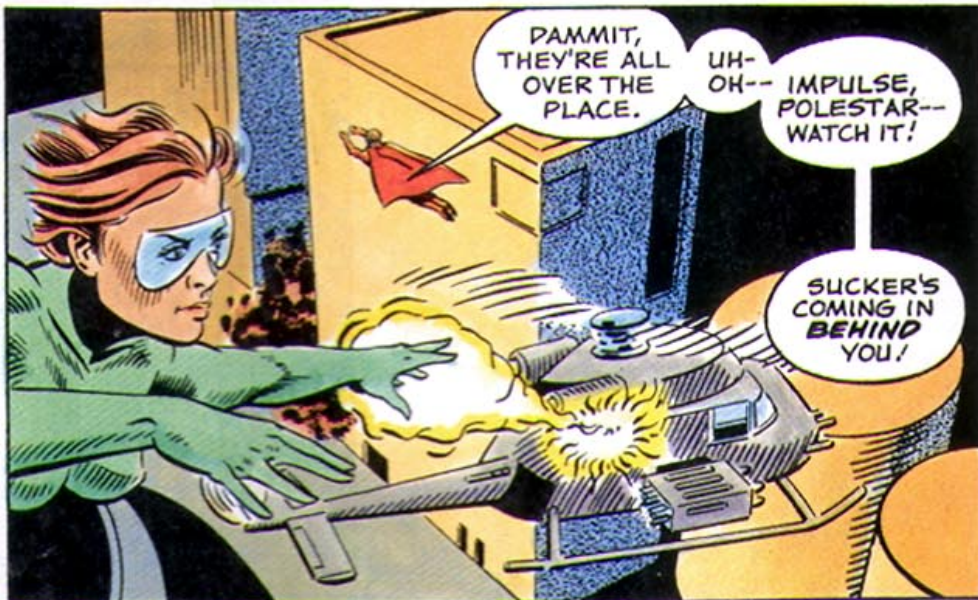
ZZED'S MEN ARE
DEFINITELY THE ONES
WHO **STOLE** YOUR
JETS, PAVY.



OKAY,
OKAY...DO
WHATEVER
YOU HAVE
TO.

I'M REALLY
GLAD TO
GET YOUR
PERMISSION,
SIR!

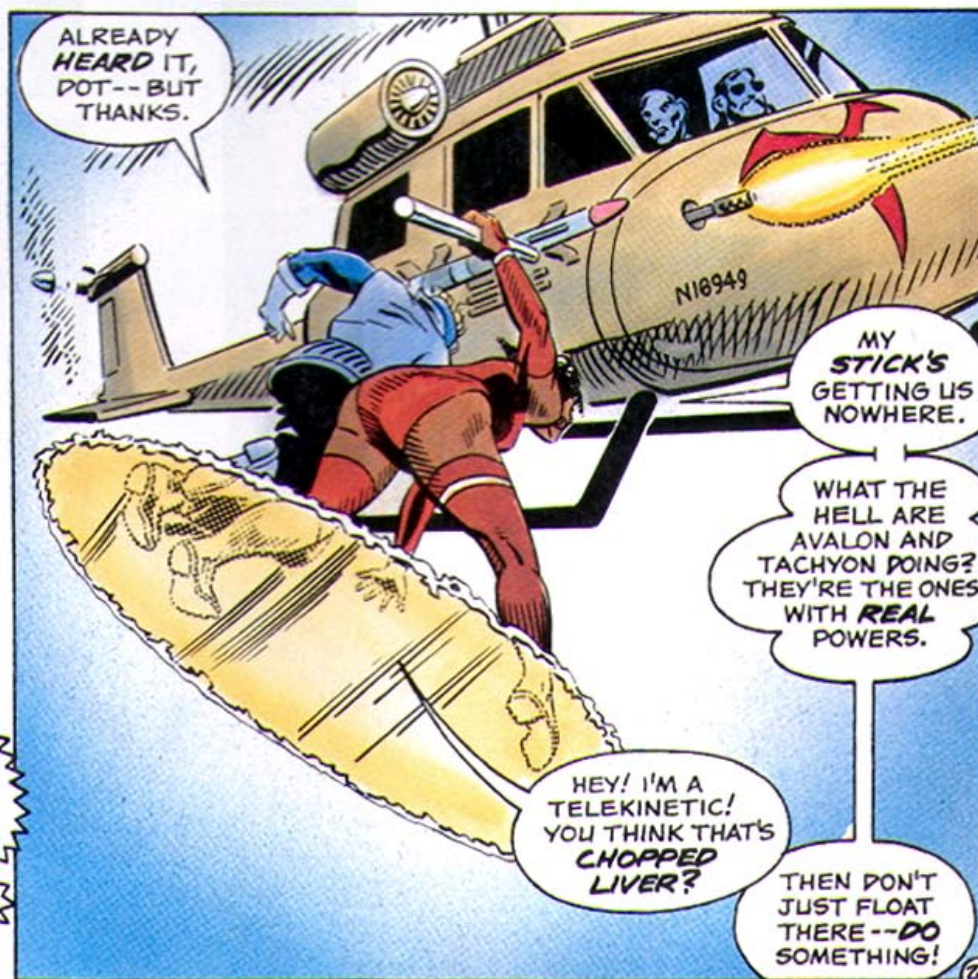
SHEEEEE--



DAMMIT,
THEY'RE ALL
OVER THE
PLACE.

UH--
OH--
IMPULSE,
POLESTAR--
WATCH IT!

SUCKER'S
COMING IN
BEHIND
YOU!



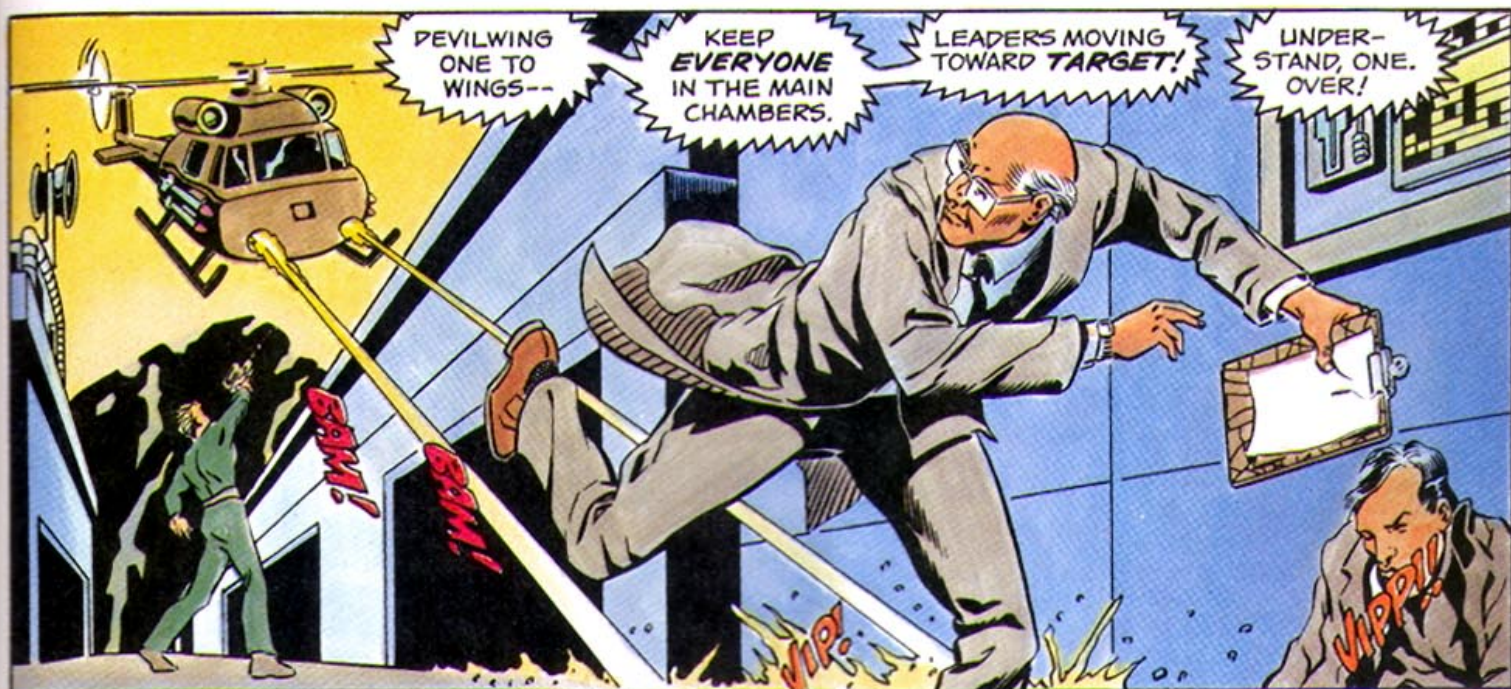
ALREADY
HEARD IT,
DOT-- BUT
THANKS.

MY
STICK'S
GETTING US
NOWHERE.

WHAT THE
HELL ARE
AVALON AND
TACHYON DOING?
THEY'RE THE ONES
WITH **REAL**
POWERS.

HEY! I'M A
TELEKINETIC!
YOU THINK THAT'S
CHOPPED
LIVER?

THEN DON'T
JUST FLOAT
THERE--**DO**
SOMETHING!

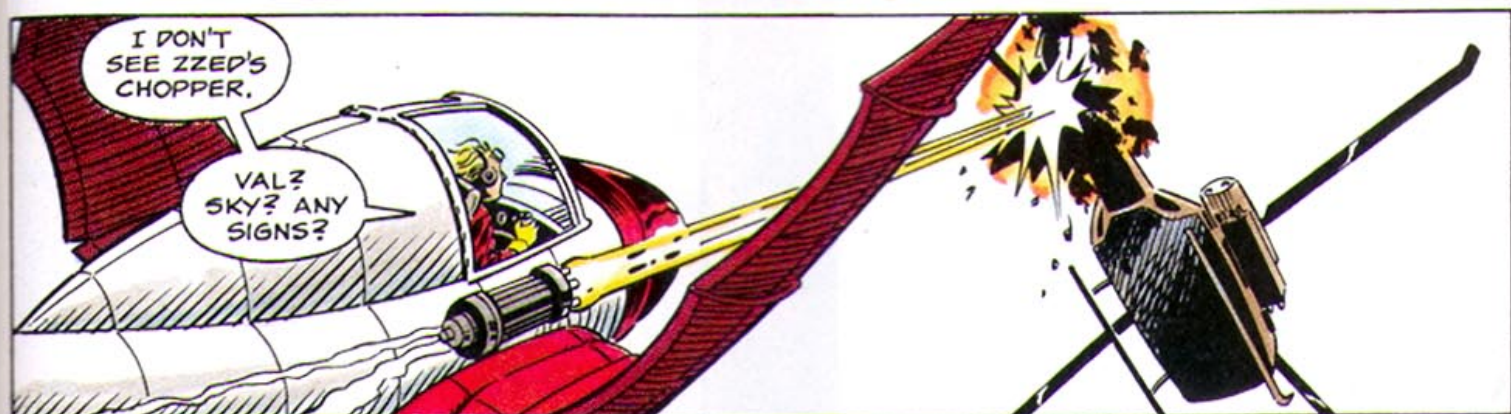


DEVILWING
ONE TO
WINGS--

KEEP
EVERYONE
IN THE MAIN
CHAMBERS.

LEADERS MOVING
TOWARD **TARGET!**

UNDER-
STAND, ONE.
OVER!



I DON'T
SEE ZZED'S
CHOPPER.

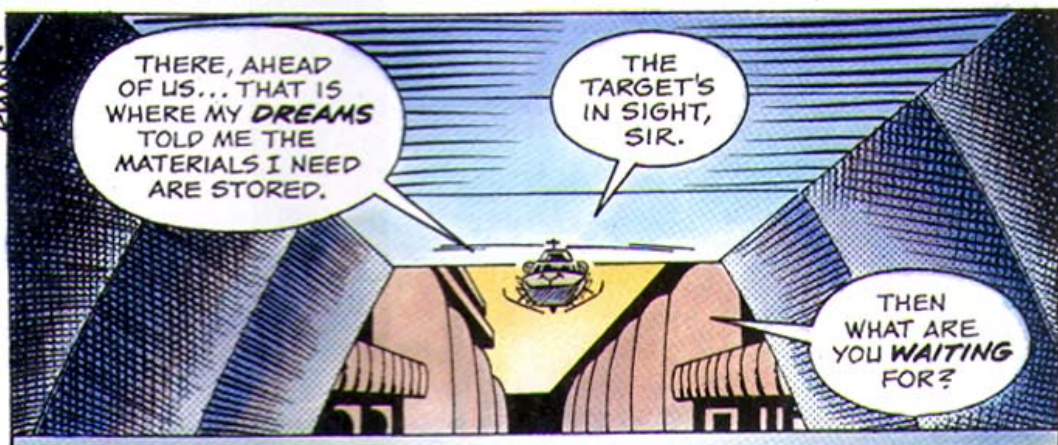
VAL?
SKY? ANY
SIGNS?



NONE,
DAVY.

I BET
THAT BOOGER'S
UP TO **SOME-
THING.**

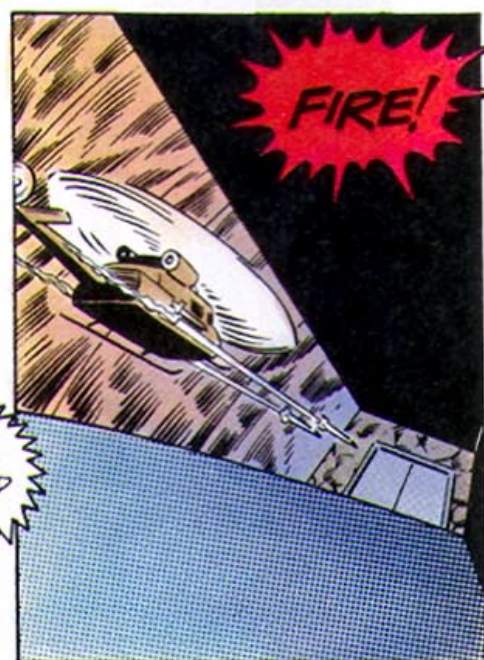
I AGREE,
SKY. LET'S
FAN OUT AND
**FIND
HIM.**



THERE, AHEAD
OF US... THAT IS
WHERE MY **DREAMS**
TOLD ME THE
MATERIALS I NEED
ARE STORED.

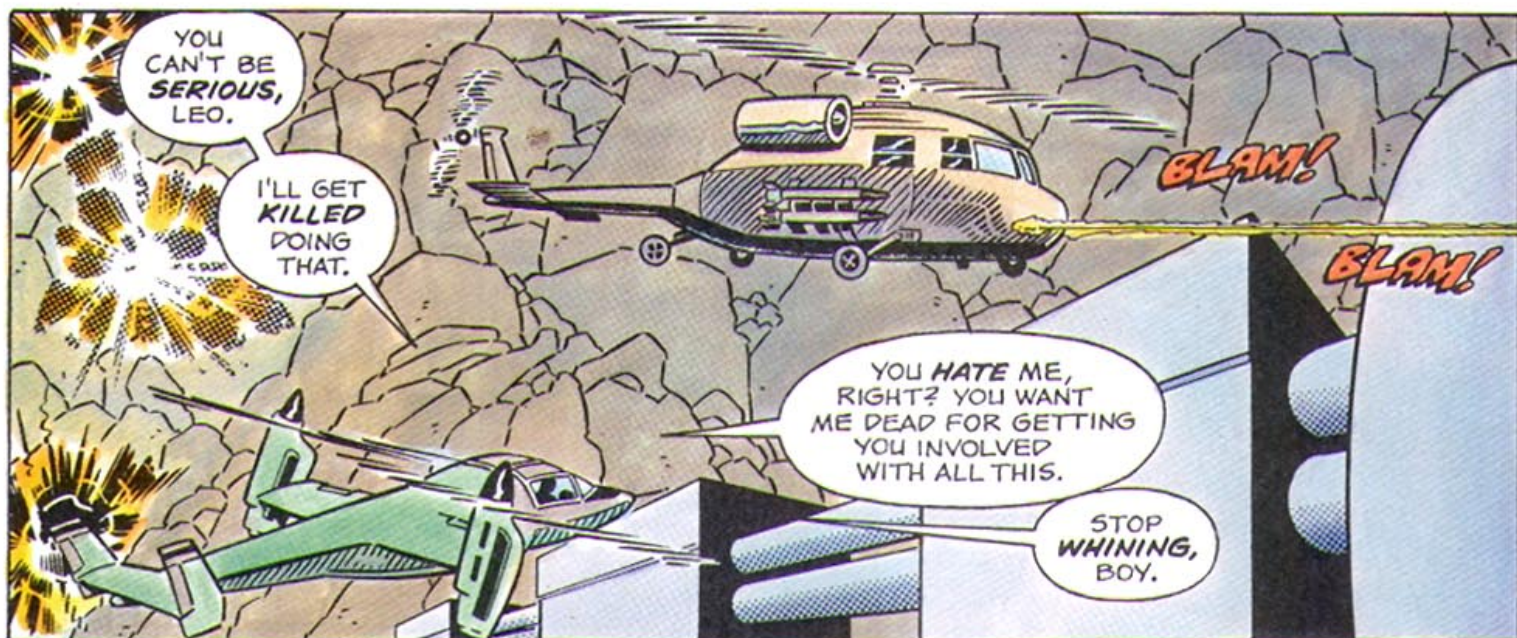
THE
TARGET'S
IN SIGHT,
SIR.

THEN
WHAT ARE
YOU **WAITING
FOR?**



FIRE!





YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS, LEO.

I'LL GET KILLED DOING THAT.

YOU HATE ME, RIGHT? YOU WANT ME DEAD FOR GETTING YOU INVOLVED WITH ALL THIS.

STOP WHINING, BOY.

BLAM!

BLAM!



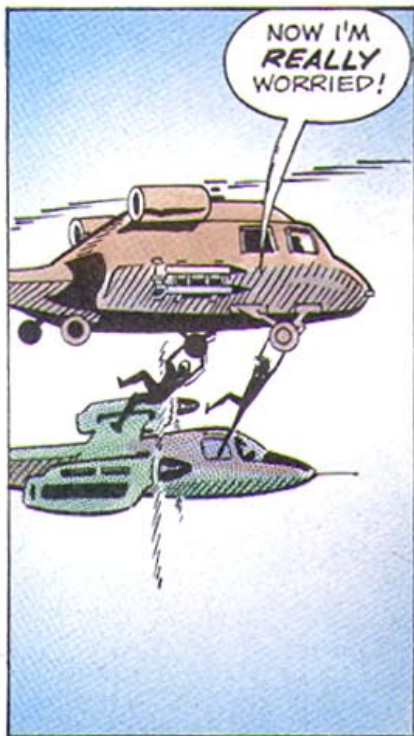
YOU AND STRIKE WILL LEAP ONTO THE CHOPPER AND TAKE IT OVER.

WE'RE FIGHTING FOR OUR LIVES AND YOU WANT ME TO PLAY ERROL FLYNN.

NOT FLYNN-- FAIRBANKS! HE WAS A REAL STAR!



DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, SCOTT-- I'LL KEEP MY EYE ON YOU.



NOW I'M REALLY WORRIED!



LEO'S SWAYING TOO MUCH. I CAN'T KEEP HOLD.

IT DOESN'T SEEM TO BE BOTHERING ME.

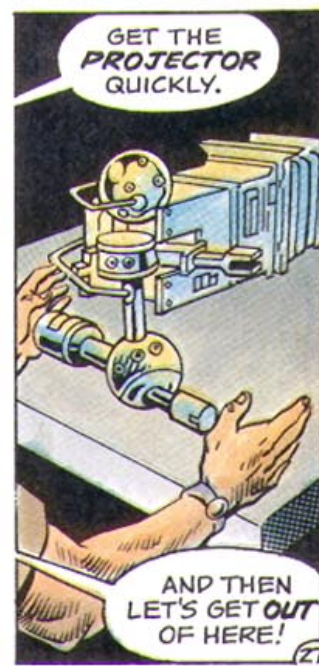
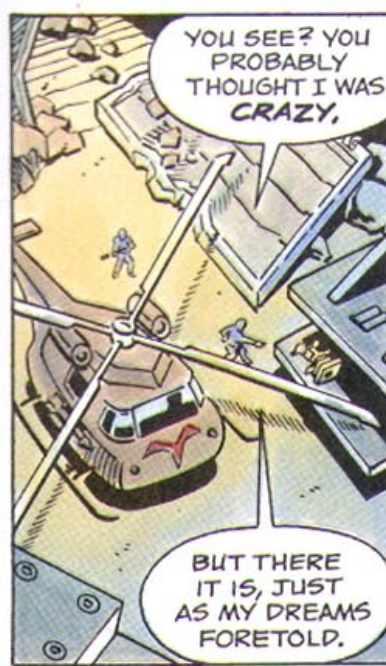
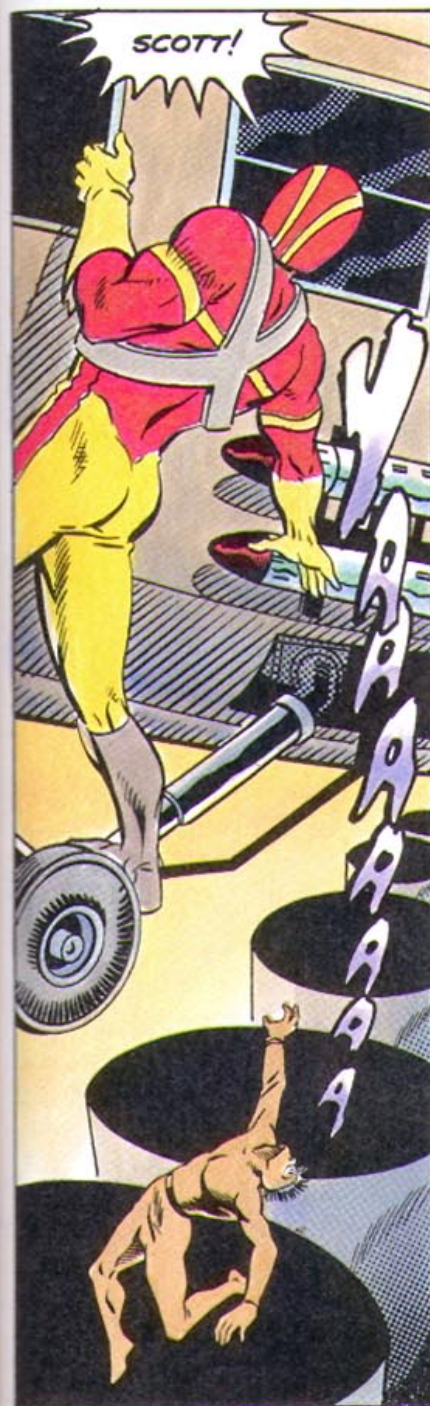
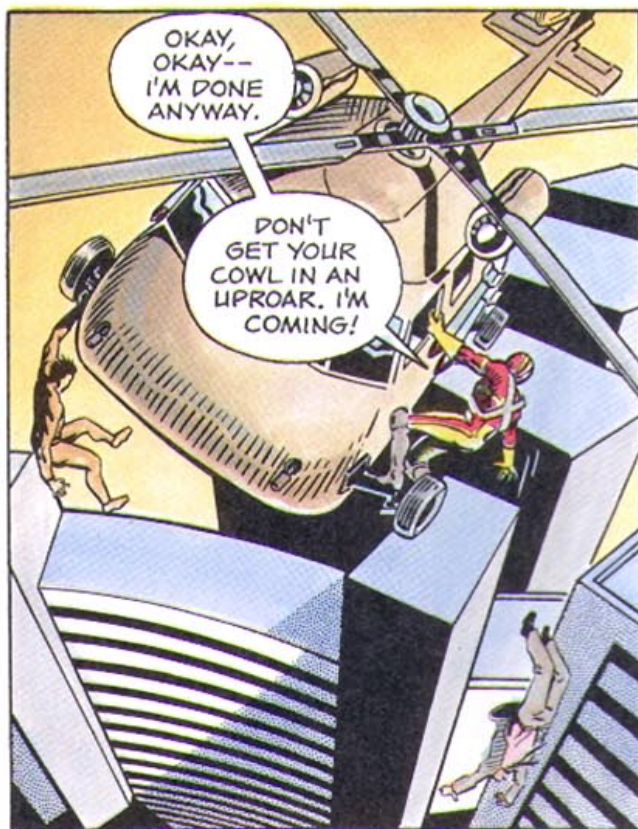
YOU'VE ALSO GOT A HARNESS THAT GIVES YOU STRENGTH-- MAKES YOU INVULNERABLE.

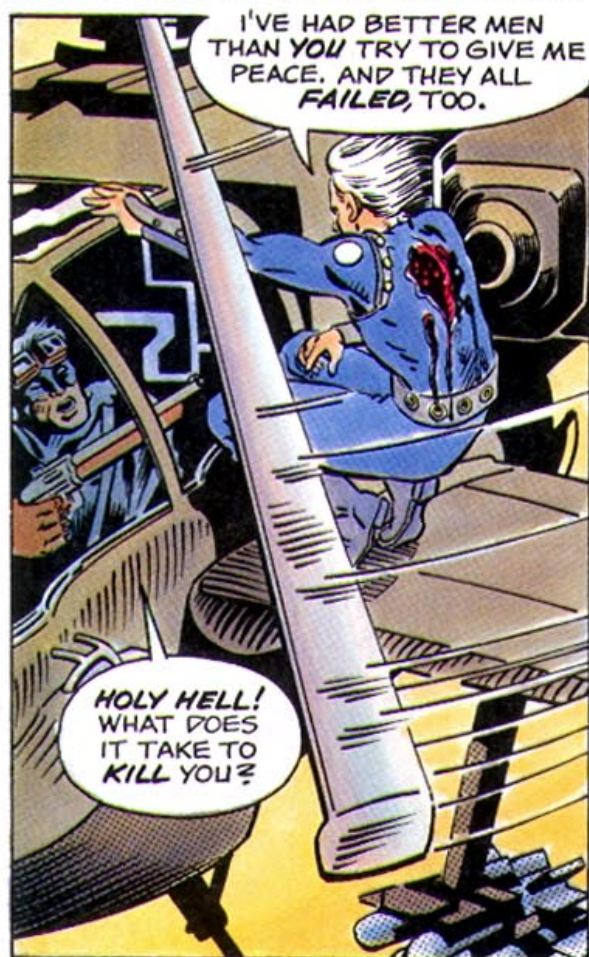
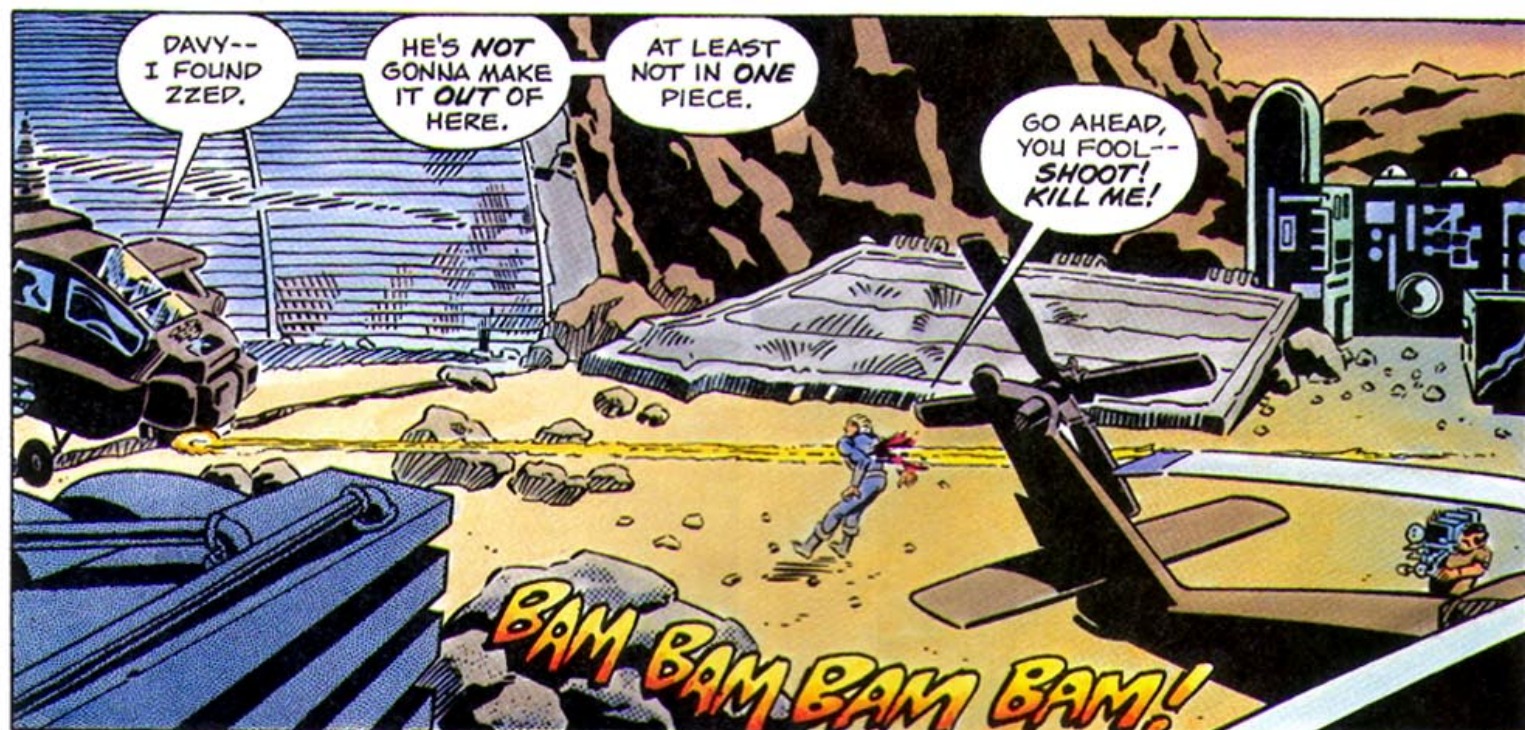


C'MON, YOU CAN HOLD ON A FEW SECONDS MORE.

LIKE THE OLD MAN SAID, KID-- STOP WHINING.

S-S-SLIPPING...



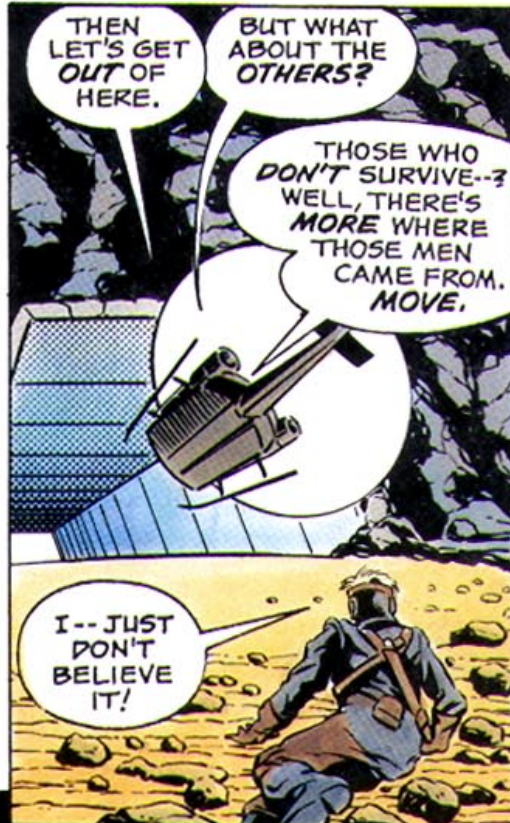




QUICKLY--
DO YOU
HAVE THE
PROJECTOR
?

YES,
SIR.

I--



THEN
LET'S GET
OUT OF
HERE.

BUT WHAT
ABOUT THE
OTHERS?

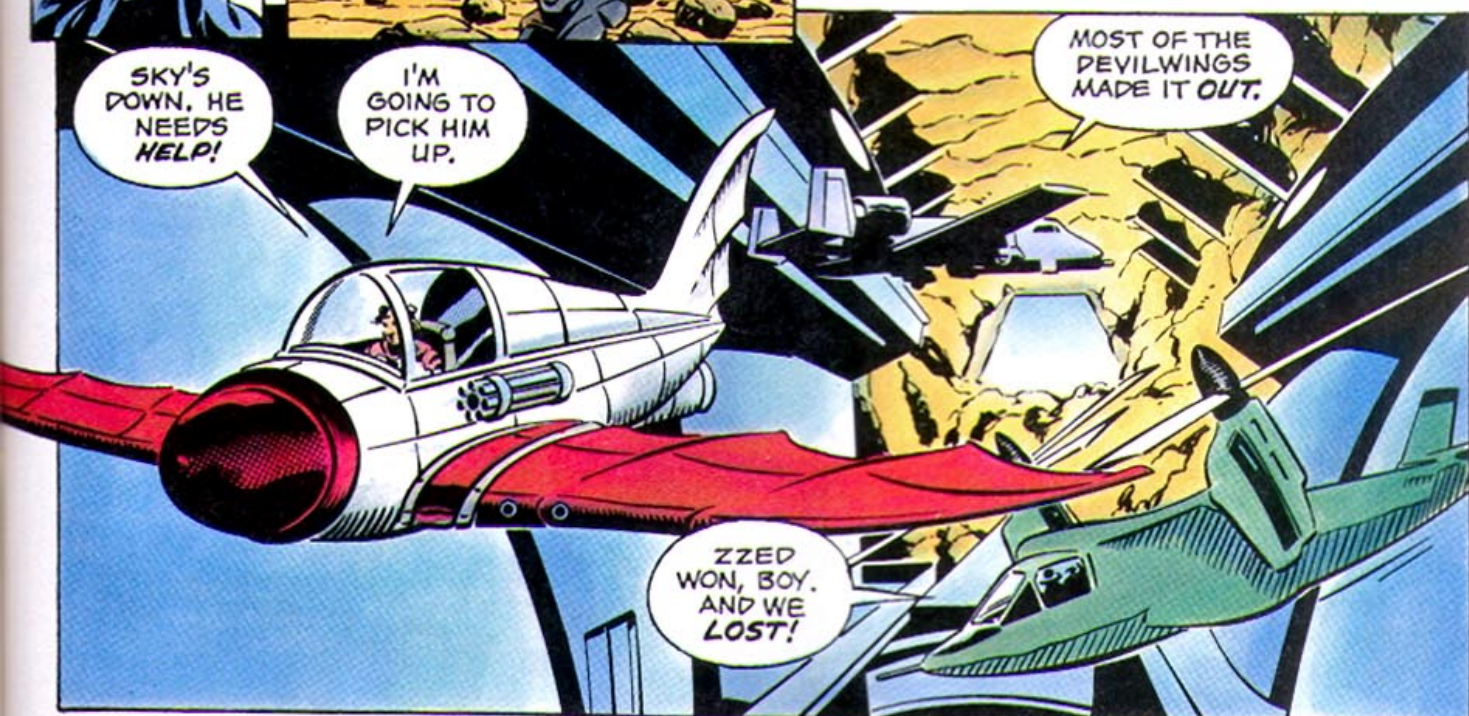
THOSE WHO
DON'T SURVIVE--?
WELL, THERE'S
MORE WHERE
THOSE MEN
CAME FROM.
MOVE.

I-- JUST
DON'T
BELIEVE
IT!



HOME!

AND
MY NEW
BEGINNING!



SKY'S
DOWN, HE
NEEDS
HELP!

I'M
GOING TO
PICK HIM
UP.

MOST OF THE
DEVILWINGS
MADE IT OUT.

ZZED
WON, BOY.
AND WE
LOST!



I DON'T THINK
SO, PROWLER. WE
ONLY LOST THE
BATTLE--

--NOT
THE
WAR!

YOUR
YOUTHFUL
ENTHUSIASM
BORDERS ON
THE NAU-
SEATING!



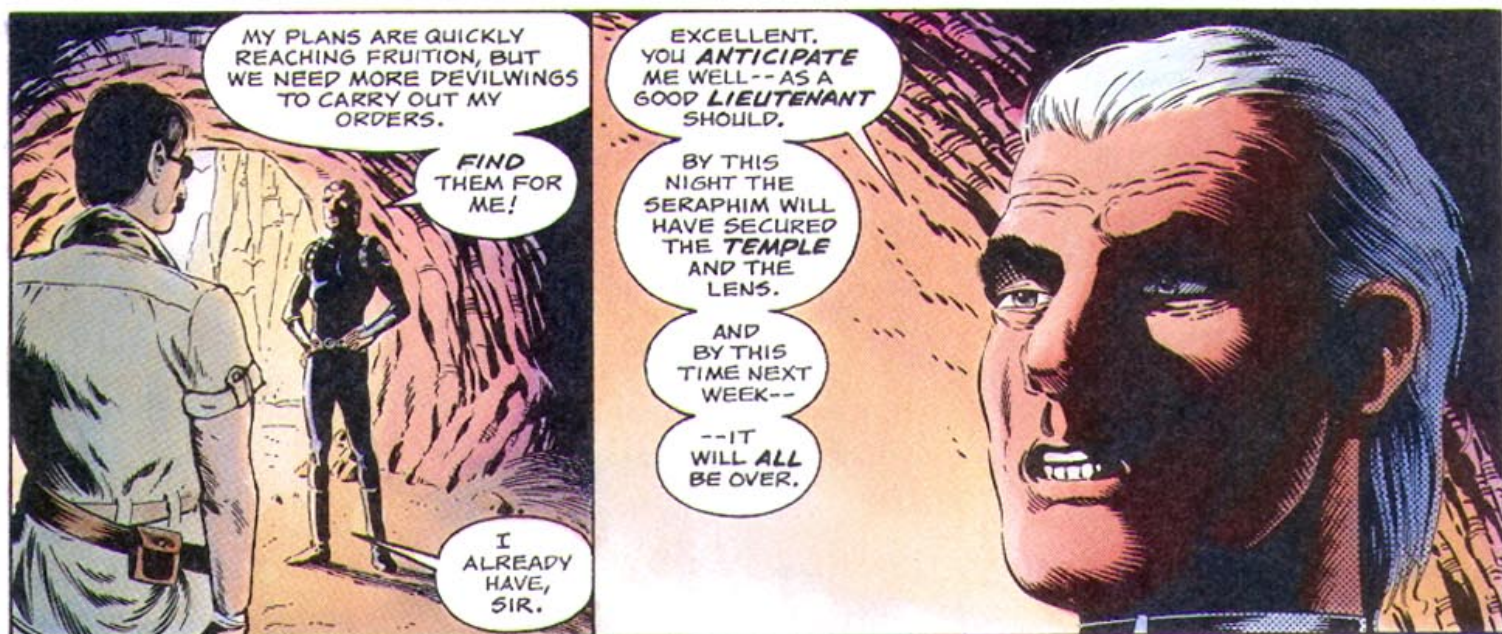
IF YOU
EXPECT TO
WIN THIS WAR,
WE NEED
HELP!

WE NEED
MISERY.



... MISERY?

OH, MY
GOD.



MY PLANS ARE QUICKLY REACHING FRUITION, BUT WE NEED MORE DEVILWINGS TO CARRY OUT MY ORDERS.

FIND THEM FOR ME!

I ALREADY HAVE, SIR.

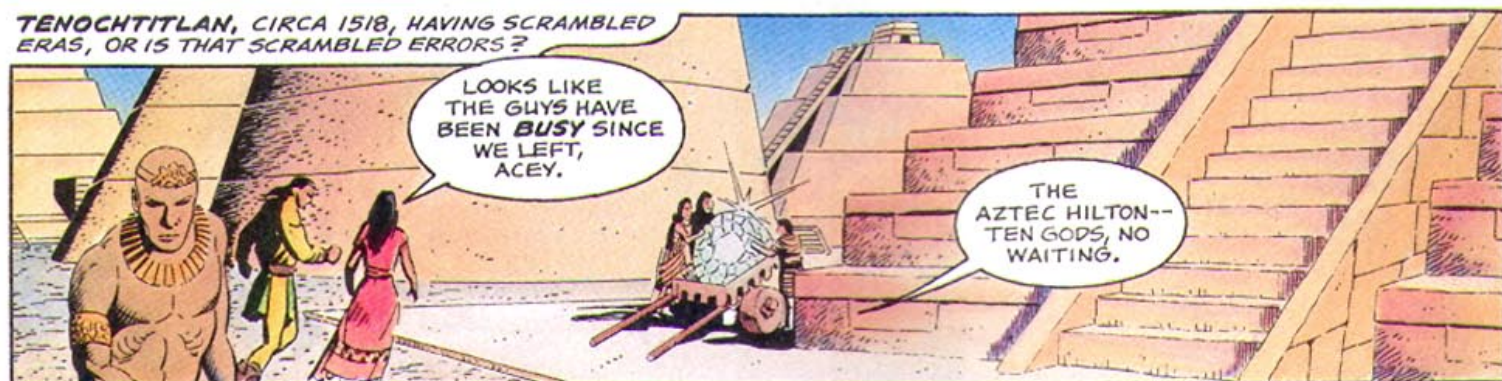
EXCELLENT. YOU ANTICIPATE ME WELL-- AS A GOOD LIEUTENANT SHOULD.

BY THIS NIGHT THE SERAPHIM WILL HAVE SECURED THE TEMPLE AND THE LENS.

AND BY THIS TIME NEXT WEEK--

--IT WILL ALL BE OVER.

TENOCHTITLAN, CIRCA 1518, HAVING SCRAMBLED ERAS, OR IS THAT SCRAMBLED ERRORS?



LOOKS LIKE THE GUYS HAVE BEEN *BUSY* SINCE WE LEFT, ACEY.

THE AZTEC HILTON-- TEN GODS, NO WAITING.



MAKE A LOVELY RING-- FOR MRS. KING KONG.

< WHAT IS THIS PATH IN WHICH YOU ARE ENGAGED? >

< VOICES... >

THE TEMPLE AT TEZHUACATPLAN...

I DON'T LIKE THAT LOOK IN YOUR EYES, ACEY-DEUCE. WHAT'S DOING?

SOMETHING'S TERRIBLY WRONG, BRIDGIT.

I'VE VISITED THIS TEMPLE IN A DOZEN DIFFERENT ERAS, AND THE JEWEL WASN'T IN ANY OF THEM.



< ... THEY COME EACH NIGHT, AND THEY TELL US TO GRIND THIS JEWEL. >

< TO PLACE ATOP THAT TEMPLE. >

< WE DO AS THE GODS COMMAND. >



AND TROUBLE LIKE THIS USUALLY MEANS THERE'S A VERY BIG **DOXIE-GLITCH** WORKING SOMEWHERE.

YOU CAN'T FOOL WITH TIME WITHOUT IT SLAPPING YOU BACK.

SO WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT IT?

PACK IN SOME SLUG-SLIME FUEL AND HEAD FOR THE AZURE CROSS-TIME EXPRESS.

WE NEED TO SEE HOW FAR THIS GLITCH HAS GONE.

A CORPSE IS A CORPSE, OF COURSE, OF COURSE.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

WHICH **PROVES** TIME'S BEEN TAMPERED WITH.

LET'S PICK A **FOCAL POINT** AND **VREEB!**

WHO'S THE **STIFF**, ACEY-DEUCE?

PRESIDENT WASHINGTON, WHAT HAPPENED?

THE DAMN FOOL AND HIS KITE.

IT ATTRACTED THE LIGHTNING AND IT **KILLED** HIM.

WHENEVER WE'RE GOING NEXT, CAN I AT LEAST CHANGE INTO MY OWN CLOTHES?

SUIT YOURSELF. WITH THIS FAR-RANGING A **DOXIE-GLITCH**, BRASS BRA-CUPS CAN'T HURT.

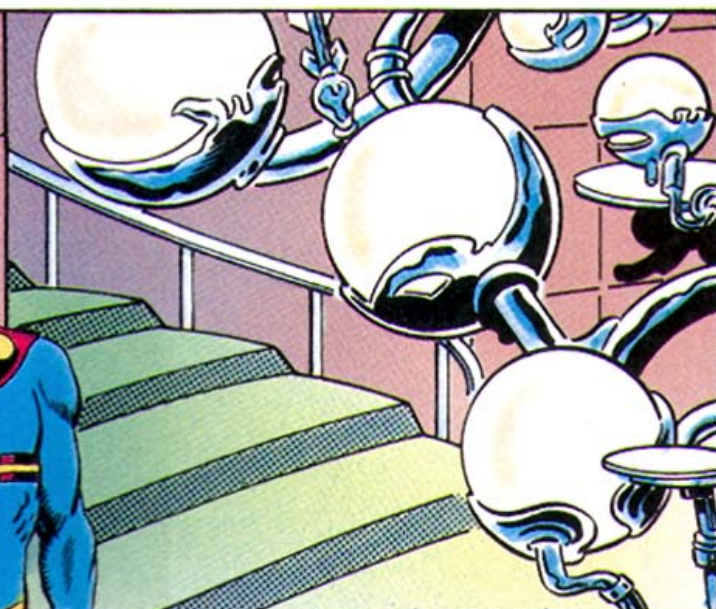
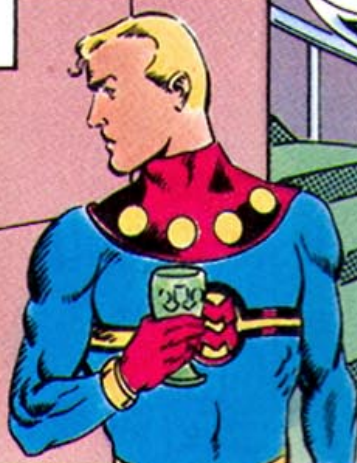
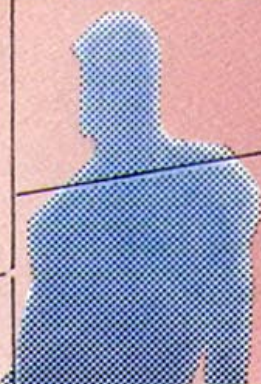
IF JEFFERSON AND I WARNED HIM ONCE, WE WARNED HIM A **THOUSAND** TIMES.

SOME-THING TELLS ME THIS MIGHT BE THE **WORST** THREAT WE'VE YET FACED, SO I MIGHT AS WELL ENJOY THE VIEW.

ELSEWHERE.

"I LISTEN TO THE BREEZE SWAY,
THEN CIRCLE, RUSHING PAST ME
THROUGH THE CORRIDORS OF
OLYMPUS AS IF DESPERATE TO
FLEE SOME--

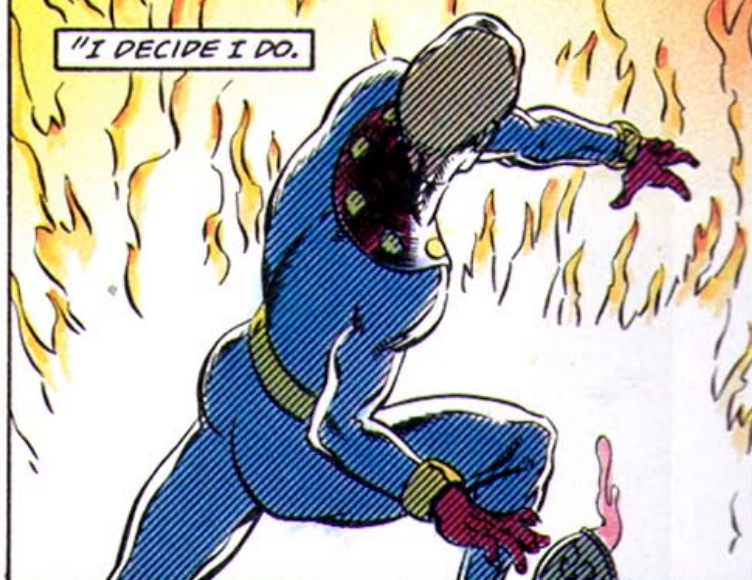
"--THING
IS WRONG.



"WALLS BURN WITH FLAMES THAT DANCE
ON MY HAND BEFORE EXTINGUISHING.
BUT THE FIRES AROUND ME GROW.

"HAS FIREBRAKE LOST CONTROL?
SHOULD I EVEN CARE?"

"I DECIDE I DO.



"THIS IS NOT THE WARPSMITHS TRYING TO
CONTACT ME IN SOME PRIMITIVE MANNER.

"I SIT BACK
IN MY CHAIR
IN OLYMPUS,
AND I THINK
AS THE WALLS
BLACKEN.

"I HAVE AN ENEMY.
SOMEHOW THAT
PLEASES ME."



THERE ARE NO LIGHTS ABOVE THE GRAND
CANYON TO OBSCURE THE STARS. EACH
GLISTENS LIKE A POLISHED GEM.



SLEEP WELL,
ZZED. TOMORROW
YOU WILL AWAKEN
AND KNOW HOW
TO CONSTRUCT
YOUR MACHINE.



AND
SOON THE
WORLD WILL
END.

SLEEP
WELL AND
TIGHT, DEAR
ZZED.

FOR
TOMORROW
YOU WILL
FINALLY
DIE.



TO BE CONTINUED



UND ZO, VE HAFF DER AZTECS POLISHING DER GEM VVICH NEFFER EXISTED-- FOR DER PURPOSE BOTH UNKNOWN UND HITHERTO NON-HAPPENINK.

UND ALSO ZO--



--VE HAFF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN DYING IN DER VAY IN VVICH HE DID NOT DIE.



CLEARLY, DEN...

...SOMETHING ISS ROTTEN IN DER HISTORICAL MARK OF DEN.

UND ALSO NOW.



IN SHORT, CAZA, VE HAFF DOXES IN DER PARA-TIME...



AZTEC ACE

ANACHROMESH IN THE MELD

OR PARADOXES IN DER TIME, NO?

YES-- AND THESE DOXIE-GLITCHES MAY BE NASTY ENOUGH TO TRASH TIME, TEMPUS, SO KNOCK OFF THE LOOPY TEUTONIC ACCENT.

QUITE RIGHT, MY GOOD CHAP-- SO SORRY AND ALL THAT, EH, WOT?

JUST HIT THE MELD, HEAD, AND MAKE FOR THE CORE OF FIVE-WORLDS-- WHILE I MARK TIME.

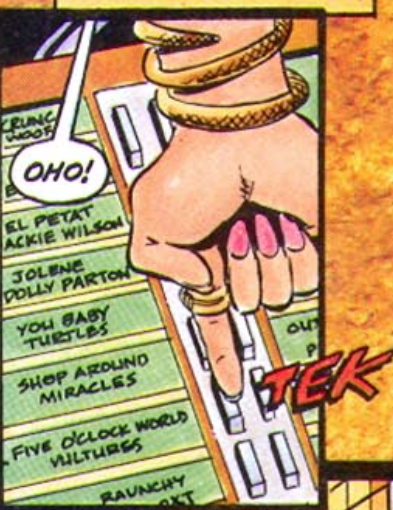
THAT WAS NO BELLE; THAT WAS A FILLY

...WHILE BRIDGET...

NOBLY
SAID, OLD
CHAP!

VREEB

AND THE AZURE CROSSTIME
EXPRESS PENETRATES THE
GOLDEN MELD-- THE VOIDISH
NON-TIME AND NO-SPACE
BETWEEN ALL TIMES AND
BEYOND ALL SPACES...



...BOOGIES ALL THE WAY FROM
THE ANACHRONY DEN--

HERE'S A GOLDEN OLDIE
WAY AFTER MY TIME!

WELL, IT'S A
FIVE O'CLOCK WORLD,
WHEN THE WHISTLE
BLOWS...

--STRAIGHT TO MY
CLOCK COLLECTION.

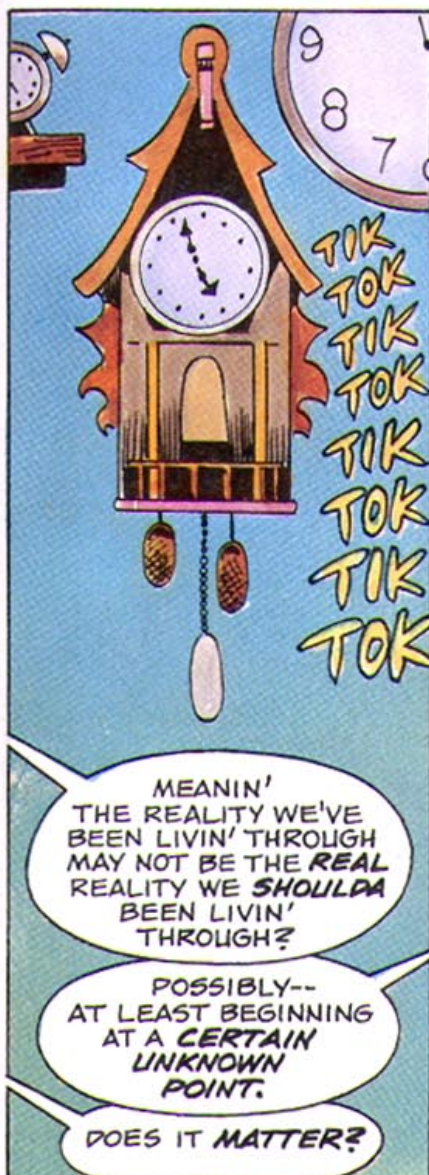
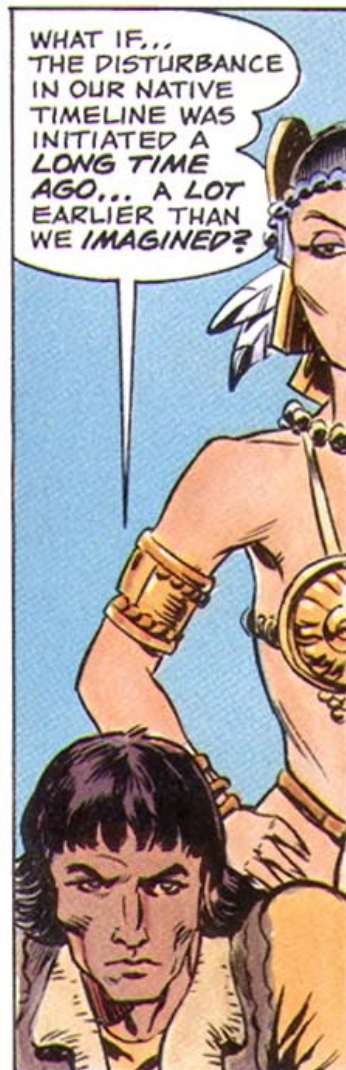
IT'S ONLY
THREE TO,
BRIDGET, SO HOLD
THE WHISTLING,
HM?

GROUCH.

I'M TRYING
TO-- EH?
WHY ARE YOU
DRESSED
LIKE THAT?

I
DON'T
KNOW...
ARE
YOU?

I AM
CLEOPATRA,
...AIN'T I?





I DIDN'T MEAN
WHEN ARE WE
LEAVING...

I MEANT...
TO WHEN ARE
WE HEADED?

OH.



ACTUALLY,
WE'RE NOT
GOING TO
ANY TIME
AT ALL.

WE'RE
REMAINING
OUT OF TIME,
EN ROUTE TO
THE EPICENTER
OF LIMBO, THE
CORE OF--



EVENING: AND EVE AGAIN

WHAT THE--?!
I JUST SWALLOWED
MY JUICY FRUIT!



KOO-KOO!

FIVE O'CLOCK,
CAZA-- AND
TROUBLE
AHEAD!

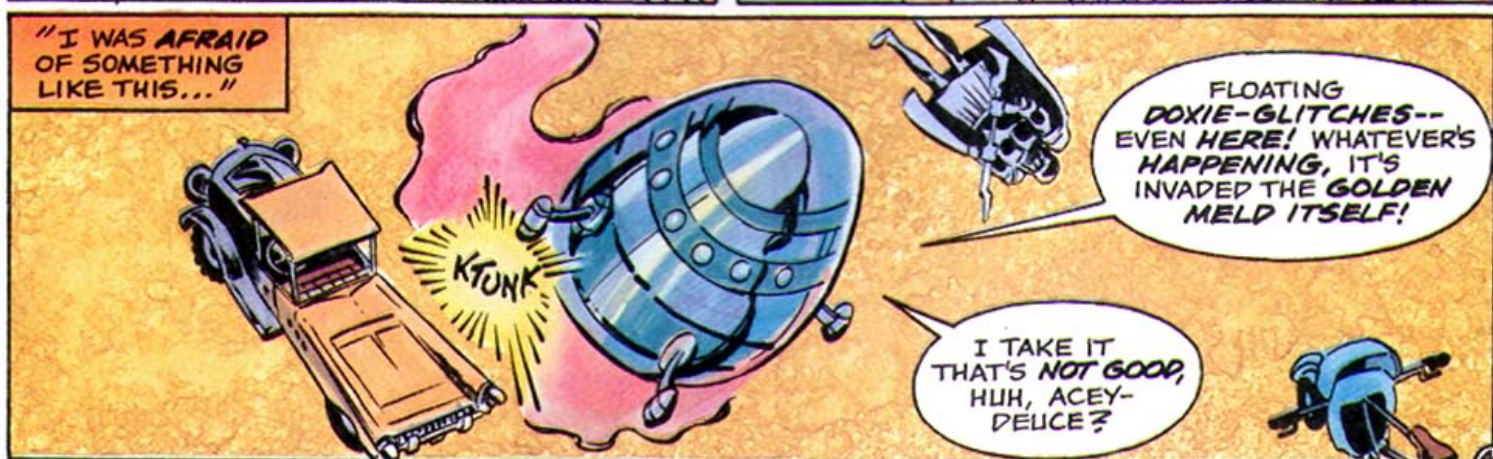
WHAT
KIND OF
TROUBLE,
TEMPUS?



I SUGGEST YOU COME
TO THE CONTROL ROOM
AND SEE THIS SHIT-
STORM FOR YOUR-
SELVES!

THEN IT'S
THAT KIND OF
TROUBLE...

COME
ON!



"I WAS AFRAID
OF SOMETHING
LIKE THIS..."

FLOATING
DOXIE-GLITCHES--
EVEN HERE! WHATEVER'S
HAPPENING, IT'S
INVADDED THE GOLDEN
MELD ITSELF!

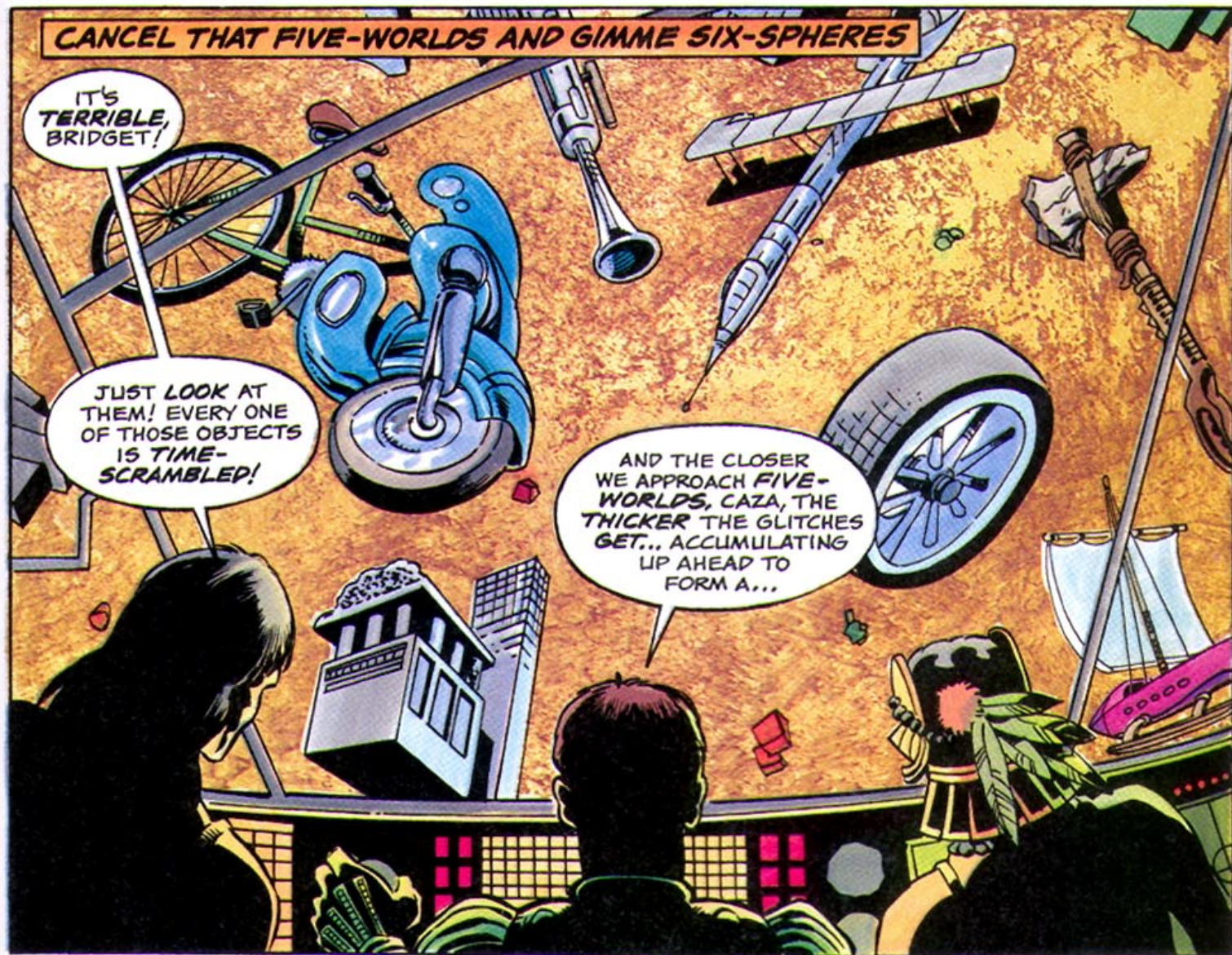
I TAKE IT
THAT'S NOT GOOD,
HUH, ACEY-
DEUCE?

CANCEL THAT FIVE-WORLDS AND GIMME SIX-SPHERES

IT'S
**TERRIBLE,
BRIDGET!**

JUST LOOK AT
THEM! EVERY ONE
OF THOSE OBJECTS
IS **TIME-
SCRAMBLED!**

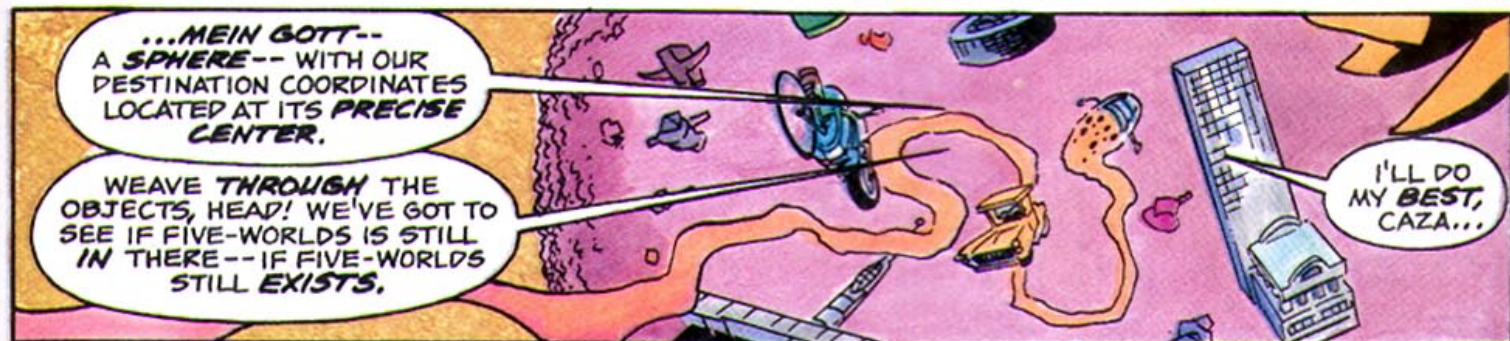
AND THE CLOSER
WE APPROACH **FIVE-
WORLDS, CAZA,** THE
THICKER THE GLITCHES
GET... ACCUMULATING
UP AHEAD TO
FORM A...



...MEIN GOTT--
A **SPHERE**-- WITH OUR
DESTINATION COORDINATES
LOCATED AT ITS **PRECISE
CENTER.**

WEAVE **THROUGH** THE
OBJECTS, HEAD! WE'VE GOT TO
SEE IF **FIVE-WORLDS** IS STILL
IN THERE-- IF **FIVE-WORLDS**
STILL **EXISTS.**

I'LL DO
MY **BEST,**
CAZA...



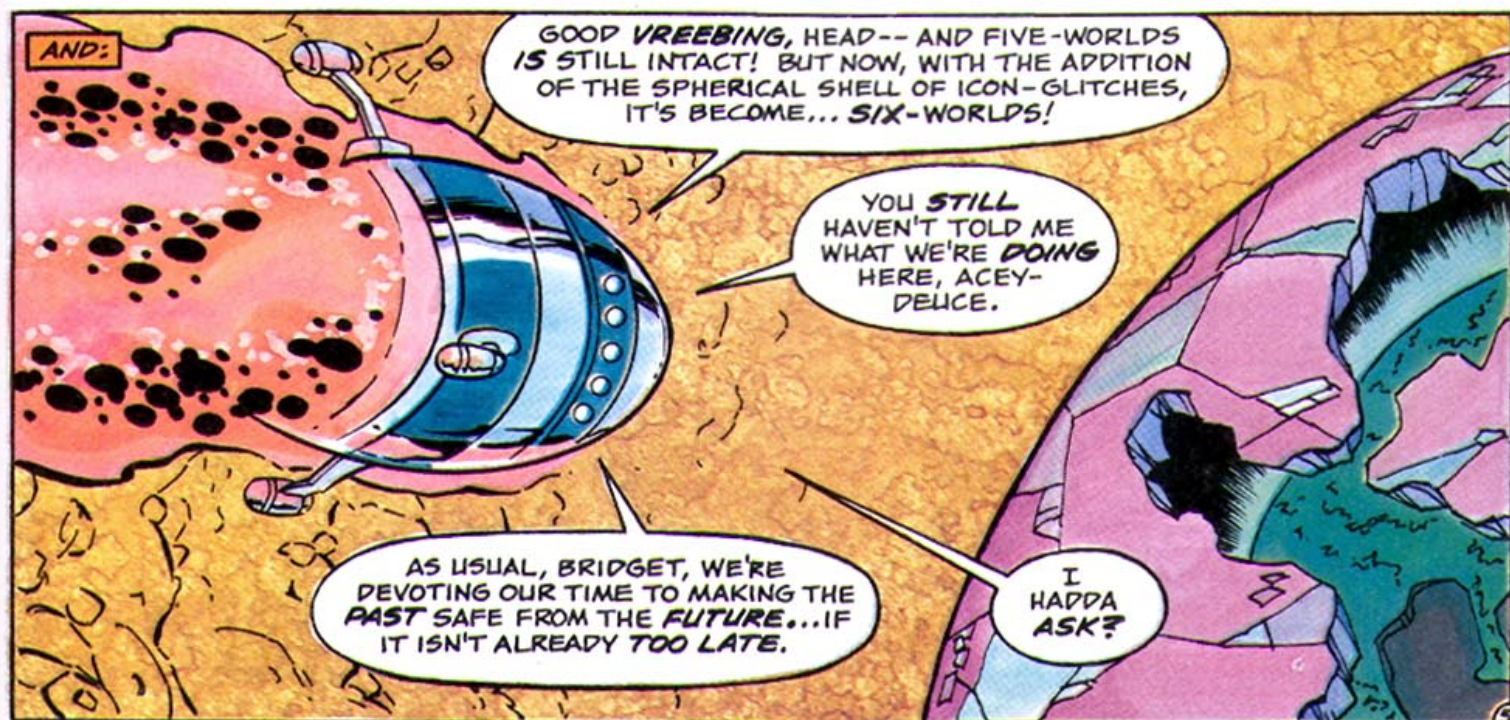
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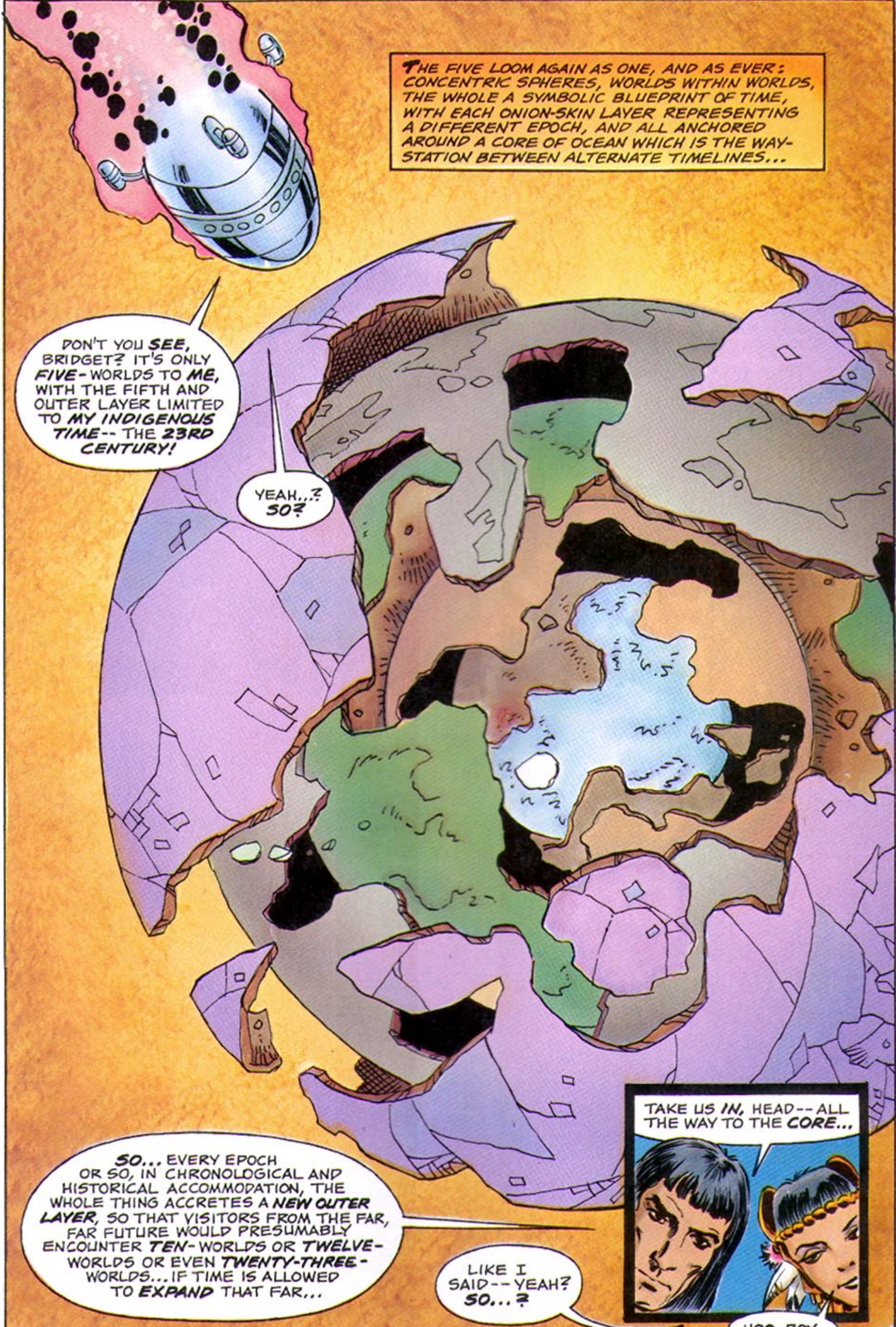
GOOD **VREEBING**, HEAD-- AND **FIVE-WORLDS**
IS STILL INTACT! BUT NOW, WITH THE ADDITION
OF THE SPHERICAL SHELL OF **ICON-GLITCHES,**
IT'S BECOME... **SIX-WORLDS!**

YOU **STILL**
HAVEN'T TOLD ME
WHAT WE'RE **DOING**
HERE, ACEY-
DEUCE.

AS USUAL, BRIDGET, WE'RE
DEVOTING OUR TIME TO MAKING THE
PAST SAFE FROM THE **FUTURE**...IF
IT ISN'T ALREADY **TOO LATE.**

I
HADDA
ASK?





THE FIVE LOOM AGAIN AS ONE, AND AS EVER: CONCENTRIC SPHERES, WORLDS WITHIN WORLDS, THE WHOLE A SYMBOLIC BLUEPRINT OF TIME, WITH EACH ONION-SKIN LAYER REPRESENTING A DIFFERENT EPOCH, AND ALL ANCHORED AROUND A CORE OF OCEAN WHICH IS THE WAY-STATION BETWEEN ALTERNATE TIMELINES...

DON'T YOU **SEE**, BRIDGET? IT'S ONLY **FIVE**-WORLDS TO ME, WITH THE FIFTH AND OUTER LAYER LIMITED TO MY **INDIGENOUS** TIME-- THE **23RD** CENTURY!

YEAH...? **SO?**

SO... EVERY EPOCH OR SO, IN CHRONOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL ACCOMMODATION, THE WHOLE THING ACCRETES A **NEW OUTER LAYER**, SO THAT VISITORS FROM THE FAR, FAR FUTURE WOULD PRESUMABLY ENCOUNTER **TEN**-WORLDS OR **TWELVE**-WORLDS OR EVEN **TWENTY-THREE**-WORLDS... IF TIME IS ALLOWED TO **EXPAND** THAT FAR...

LIKE I SAID-- YEAH? **SO...?**

TAKE US **IN**, HEAD-- ALL THE WAY TO THE **CORE**...

HOO-BOY...



SHOULDA
KNOWN
YOU WERE
GOING TO
SEE THAT
CREEP
NINE-
CROCODILE...

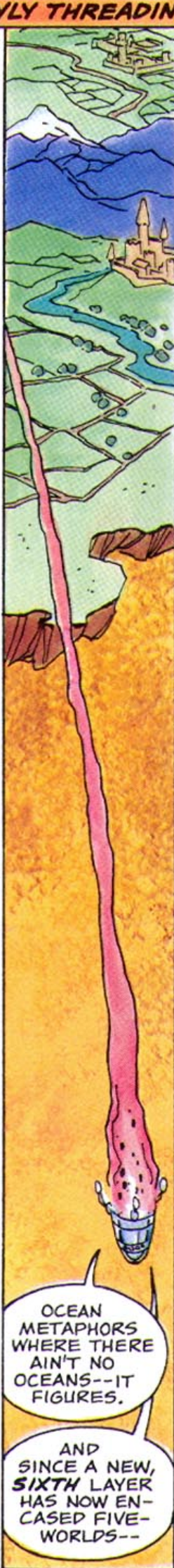
NOT TO
SEE HIM,
BRIDGET...

...TO
SPY ON
HIM.



THAT
GEM AND
FRANKLIN'S
UNTIMELY
DEATH,
YOU SEE--

--ARE
MERE **NANO-
SECONDS** IN
THE BUCKET
OF TIME.



OCEAN
METAPHORS
WHERE THERE
AIN'T NO
OCEANS--IT
FIGURES.

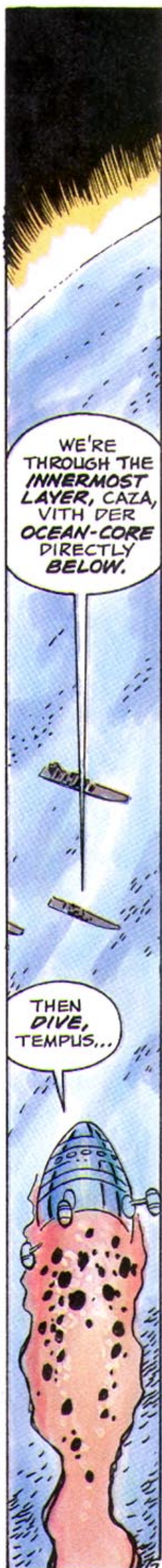
AND
SINCE A NEW,
SIXTH LAYER
HAS NOW EN-
CASED FIVE-
WORLDS--



--AND SINCE
THE **FUTURE**
THAT LAYER
PORTENDS IS
NOTHING BUT
A SCRAMBLED
MASS OF PARA-
DOX-GLITCHES--



--SOMETHING
BIG IS
OBVIOUSLY
UP...PERHAPS
EVEN THE **END**
OF TIME
ITSELF.



WE'RE
THROUGH THE
INNERMOST
LAYER, CAZA,
VITH DER
OCEAN-CORE
DIRECTLY
BELOW.

THEN
DIVE,
TEMPUS...



"...BEFORE
ANY OF THE
EBONATI
SPOT US..."

"...AND JUST
KEEP GOING
UNDERWATER..."

PLOOSH!



...ALL THE WAY
TO KROK'S CITY-
SHIP.



DER
BINGO,
CAZA.

Y'KNOW, THERE IS A MATA HARI
OUTFIT IN THE INFINITY CLOSET...

FORGET IT,
BRIDGET.

THIS
SPYING MISSION
IS STRICTLY
SOLO.

STUBBORN
POOP.



BOIT

MY MOLECULES
PASS THROUGH
THE A.C.E.'S
HULL, AND I
FOLLOW MY
BUBBLES TO
THE SURFACE.



**VREEB
EEB
EEB
EEB
EEB
EEB
EEB**

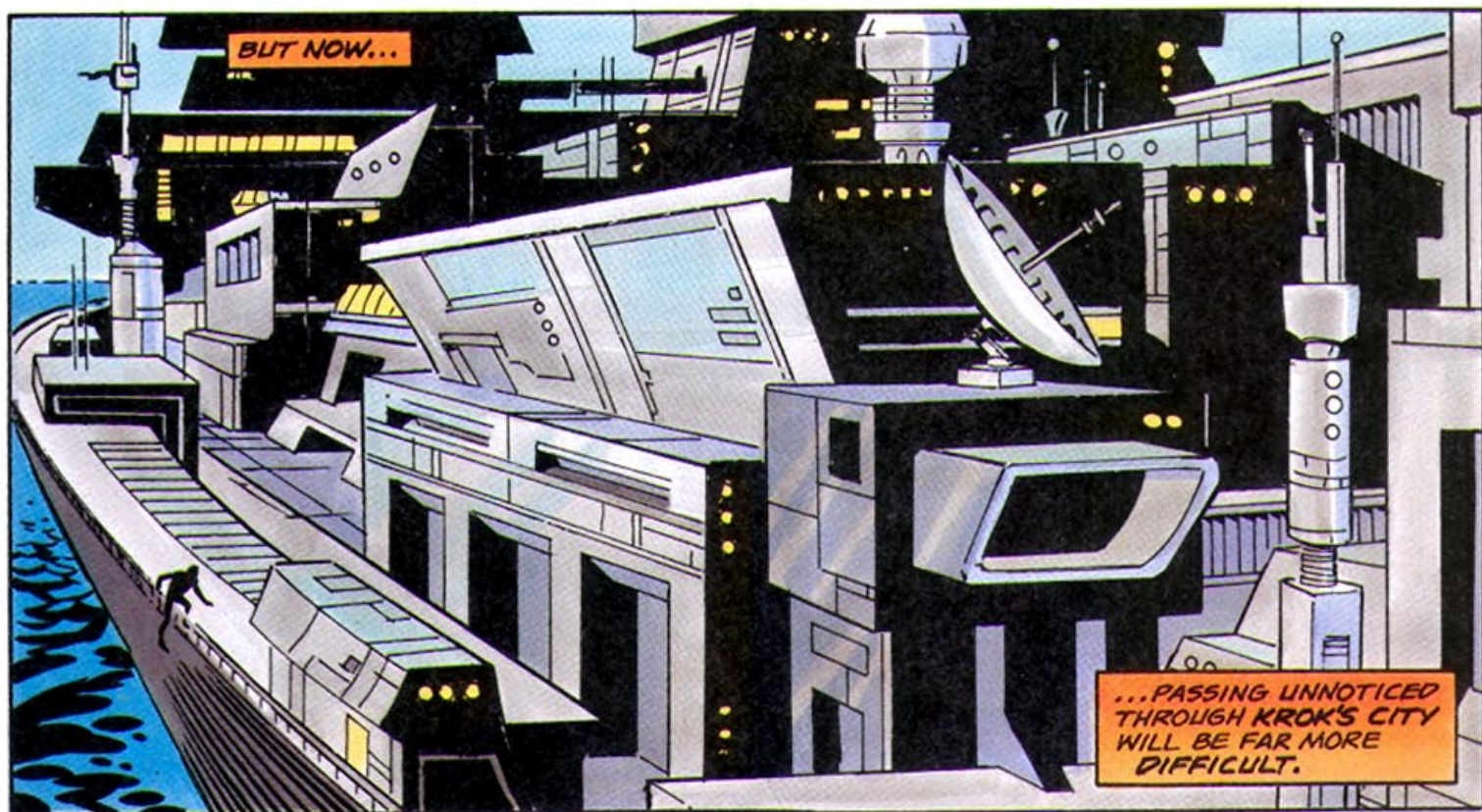
BOARDING NINE-
CROCODILE'S SHIP
POSES NO PROBLEMS
AT ALL.

I SIMPLY POINT
MY SCRAMBACK
WRIST-DEVICE AT
THE RAILING...



...GRASP THE RE-
TRACTING LINE OF
ENERGY...

...AND
HANG
ON.



BUT NOW...

...PASSING UNNOTICED THROUGH KROK'S CITY WILL BE FAR MORE DIFFICULT.

ONE HOUR AND THREE CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH EBONATI SHADOW-KNIGHT PATROLS LATER, I SCALE THE BACK WALL OF KROK'S HOME...

HE HASN'T-- AND IT IS STILL CLEAR...

--SATELLITE AND GEM ARE ALMOST COMPLETED, NINE-CROCOPILE, AND OUR ROVING SECURITY VOID-HOLES ARE IN PLACE.

...EVEN IF THE MEANING OF THEIR WORDS IS ANYTHING BUT CLEAR.

LEFT TURN--
23
SKIDDOO!

ANOTHER PATROL.

AND WITH SO MANY KNIGHTS ABROAD--

--IT IS CLEAR THAT KROK'S PLANNING A BIG DAY.

ROOFTOP SEARCH--
MARCH!

HUP-TWO-THREE!

EH--?

THEN WE SHALL BE READY FOR THE SUN, SHADOW-KNIGHT, WITH TIME TO SPARE--AND DESTROY.

BUT MUCH AS I'D LIKE TO LEARN THE NATURE OF HIS PLANS...

...HOPING HE HASN'T PAINTED THE SKYLIGHT OVER HIS INNER SANCTUM.



...I CANNOT RISK
GETTING CAUGHT
HERE IN LIMBO.

AND BESIDES...I'VE
ALREADY HEARD
MORE THAN ENOUGH.



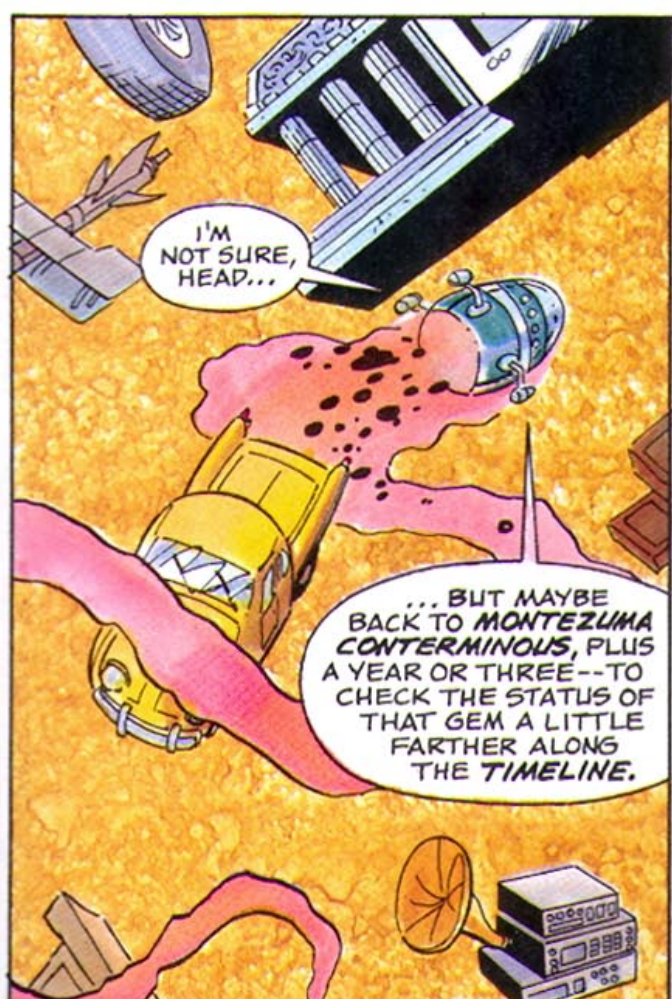
BY THE TIME WE
LEAVE THE ROTTEN
CORE, BRIDGET
AND HEAD KNOW
EVERYTHING I DO.

THEN
KROK IS
BEHIND
IT...



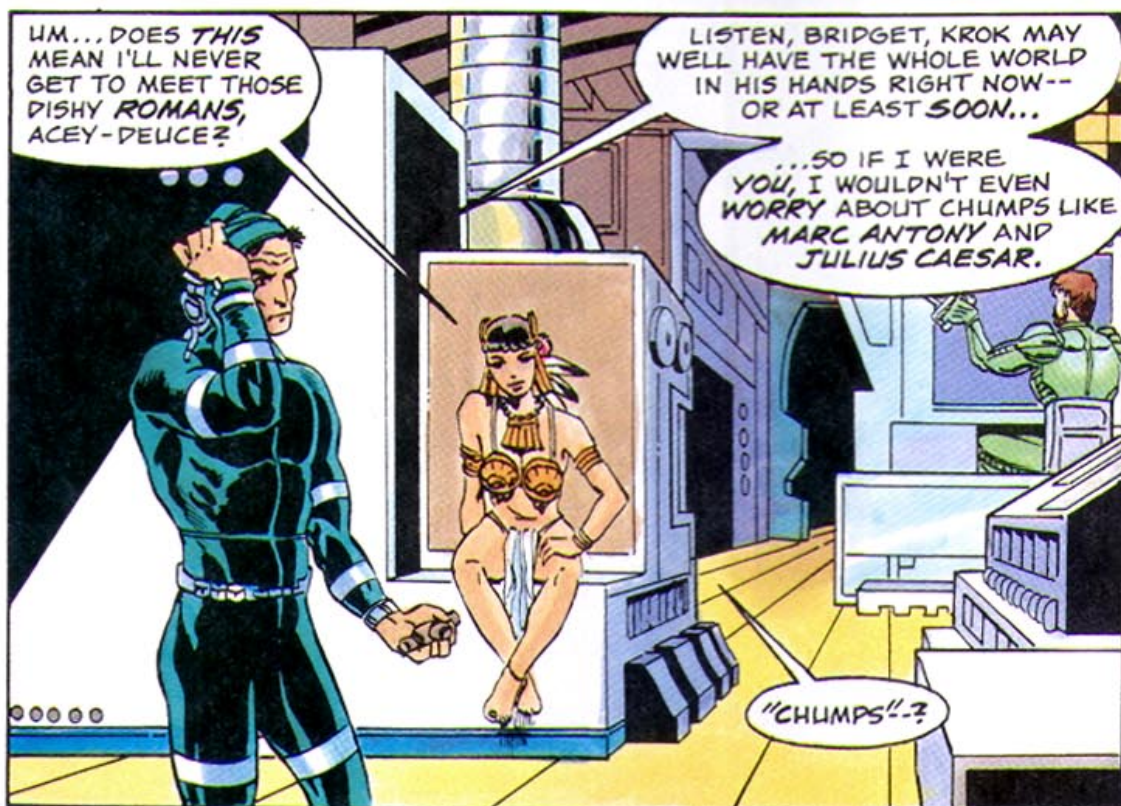
YES, BRIDGET--
WHATEVER "IT"
IS, EXACTLY.

BUT
WHERE UND
WHEN TO NOW,
CAZA?



I'M
NOT SURE,
HEAD...

... BUT MAYBE
BACK TO MONTEZUMA
CONTERMINOUS, PLUS
A YEAR OR THREE--TO
CHECK THE STATUS OF
THAT GEM A LITTLE
FARTHER ALONG
THE **TIMELINE**.



UM... DOES **THIS**
MEAN I'LL NEVER
GET TO MEET THOSE
DISHY ROMANS,
ACEY-DEUCEZ?

LISTEN, BRIDGET, KROK MAY
WELL HAVE THE WHOLE WORLD
IN HIS HANDS RIGHT NOW--
OR AT LEAST **SOON**...

...SO IF I WERE
YOU, I WOULDN'T EVEN
WORRY ABOUT CHUMPS LIKE
MARC ANTONY AND
JULIUS CAESAR.

"CHUMPS"--?



RELATIVITY SPEAKING,
YES.

IN **FACT**,
I WOULDN'T
EVEN WORRY
ABOUT YOUR
ASP.

OUCH.

Kingston, Youngstown, San Bernardino?

As soon as *Sabre* was released in late 1978, we started to receive phone calls from various creative people in the industry who were interested in having their own graphic albums published. The first to call was P. Craig Russell.

I had met Craig only a few times through Don McGregor, but because Craig lived in Youngstown, Ohio, I rarely had the chance to talk with him. That all changed once we agreed to go ahead with the new book Craig had conceived—*Night Music*.

Craig's artistic style and approach was rapidly changing toward the end of his regular schedule on the *War of the Worlds* series with Don at Marvel. The *Dr. Strange* annual Craig plotted and drew was a true turning point both in his career and in the maturity of the medium. It was, and is, an exquisite piece of work.*

Night Music was to be the next phase in Craig's developing style, and an homage to those artists who influenced his earlier efforts.

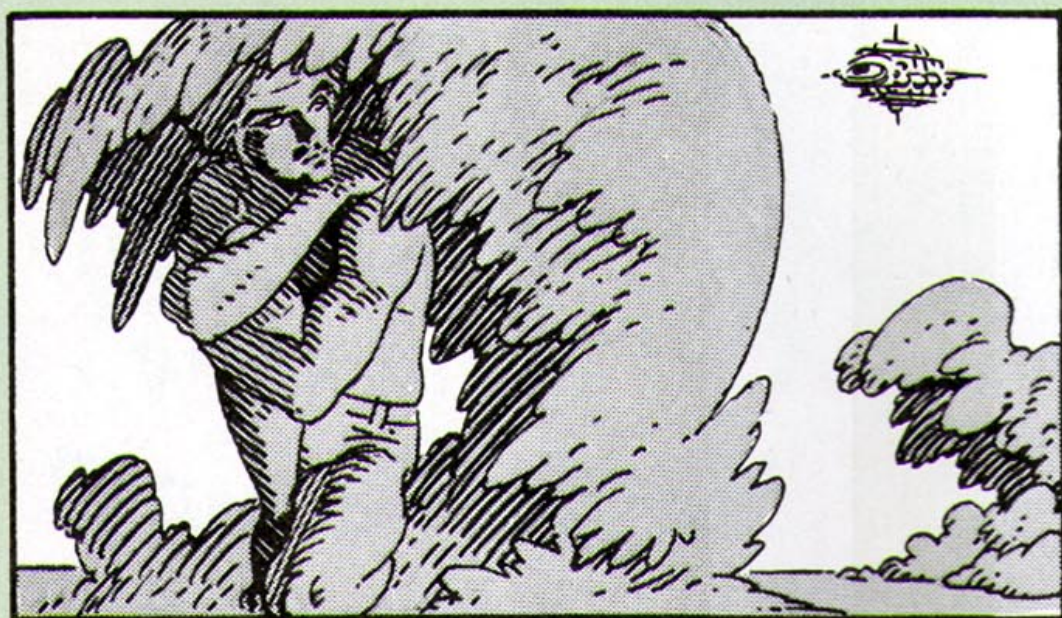
Everyone familiar with Craig's oeuvre is aware that he creates new work on a relatively slow, but very consistent, basis. Actually, he's not really slow at all. In an industry where quantity is often valued more than quality, Craig was the first comics artist I met who understood how important his own pacing was to producing his finest work. When Craig and I sat down for our luncheon meeting at the wonderful (and now unfortunately no longer in business) Schraft's restaurant on 34th Street in New York, he told me that it would take him nine months to complete *Night Music*.

We wanted to publish another book in the meantime, and it turned out to be one completely out of left field. My long-time friend Richard Bruning (now Art Director at DC Comics) called one day in late 1978 to ask if I'd be interested in publishing a collection by a

* For a complete listing of Craig's works from this period, see the text page in the Eclipse color comic book *Night Music* #3, or send an S.A.S.E. to us for a photocopy.



by Dean Mullaney



© 1988 P. Craig Russell

friend of his who had an ongoing parody strip in Alan Light's *The Buyer's Guide for Comics Fandom*. Like Richard, I'd been a fan of Fred Hembeck's strip, *Dateline: @!?!#*, since its inception. Rich put me in touch with Fred, we hit it off, and what became the first in a long-running series of Fred Hembeck collections was published in January 1979.

Fred and his wife Lynn are marvelous people. I remember their wedding, which was held in the banquet room at this fabulous old hotel in downtown Kingston, New York, that should be a historical landmark if it isn't already. I drove nearly six hours from my apartment in Philadelphia to Kingston. For any of you who grew up in a small town, or now live in one, you'd love Kingston. It's one of those upstate New York towns nestled in the Catskills that still has a thriving center, surrounded by blocks and blocks of large, one family houses, spreading out until farmland takes over. A short drive away and you're in Woodstock.

That area of New York State now has a thriving comics community. If I recall, though, the only comics professionals living in the area then were Fred, Joe Staton, and Bob Haney. (Incidentally, if you ever come across a book called *Home-Made Houses in Woodstock*, or something like that, authored by Robert Haney, not only is it a good book, but it's by the same guy who wrote all those *Brave & Bold* stories for DC. And if you find two copies, pick one up for me and I'll pay you back—I lost my copy in a flood a couple of years ago.)

Fred prepared a color guide for the covers to *Hembeck, The Best of Dateline: @!?!#*, but that left us needing someone to do the actual color separations. My always intrepid buddy Mark Gruenwald suggested he and I do the separations ourselves! And we did. Mark and I

spent countless hours sitting around an Upper West Side Manhattan apartment executing overlay after overlay of hand-cut color separations. It was an experience I later much appreciated once Eclipse entered color comics publishing on a large scale.

My brother Jan and I also wanted a permanent Eclipse logo and colophon, and we approached Tom Orzechowski because we wanted the best. Tom's Eclipse "moon and star" colophon made its first appearance on the cover of *Hembeck* and has received numerous accolades in the intervening years.

Tom was lettering *Night Music* at the time, being Craig's first and only choice for the job. Whether in New York then or San Francisco now, I've always enjoyed visiting Tom's studio. No trip to Tom's is complete without an envious look through his first-class collection of rare calligraphy books, a healthy discussion of trends in popular music, and a debate on why the letter "J" and the singular "I" are the only ones lettered as serifs in comics! And all the while, long-haired cats walking, prancing, jumping, and scurrying about and between your feet...

Both *Sabre* and *Hembeck* were profitable enough to allow Jan and me to begin two new productions. We turned to Don McGregor again for one, and to Steve Gerber for the other, and in each case, Tom provided the lettering and logo designs. Tom's title logo for Steve Gerber's *Stewart the Rat* remains my favorite of all the logos we've ever published.

Meanwhile, Craig was nearing completion of *Night Music* and, by its publication in November 1979, we had become good friends during his regular visits to New York. It was during one of these visits that Craig told me of a very interesting theory he has about comics criticism and what's lacking in it. He believes that there is a void in comics *art* critiques

because most of the people writing reviews are writers, and those better qualified to write art reviews (the artists) are too busy drawing! As a writer, it's a perspective I didn't see before Craig pointed it out, and ever since, I've taken his valid point of view into consideration.

I also learned more about Craig's art influences while watching a revival of Walt Disney's *Sleeping Beauty*. All the way across town to the giant Loew's theatre on Broadway, Craig was raving about the background paintings by Eyvind Earle. I hadn't seen *Sleeping Beauty* since I was perhaps eight years old, and mainly remembered the "realistic" Prince on horseback galloping through the forest to fight the dragon. (As an adult, I learned about rotoscoping, but as an eight-year-old, it sure looked good!) After sitting through all 75 minutes of *Sleeping Beauty*, particularly the gala scenes at the castle, I'll be damned if I couldn't see the remarkable similarities between Earle's renaissance-styled backgrounds and parts of Craig's work. Next time *Sleeping Beauty* plays near you, you can see for yourself.

Steve Gerber was very anxious to begin a new project after his recent problems with and departure from Marvel Comics. A few years earlier, Steve's *Howard the Duck* became a surprise hit for Marvel. When he continued to have contractual problems with the corporation, he vowed that if he were ever fired, he would create a comic book character named "Stanley the Rat." (Can you imagine the consternation this would have caused in certain quarters when someone would call: "Hey, Stan-lee, you rat!"?)

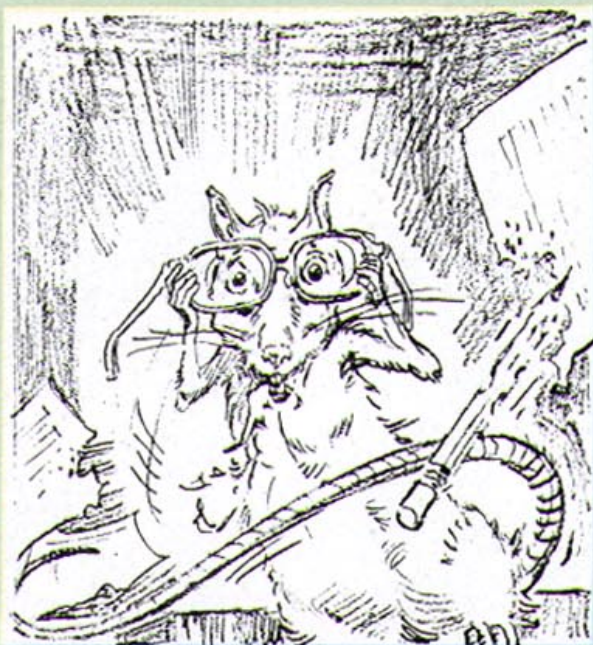
Steve's contractual problems continued and he left the company, but decided along the way to change Stanley's name to Stewart. It may not be as funny an in-joke, but it certainly scans better.

Steve first proposed a young animator he knew named Will Meugniot to illustrate the rat's adventures. Until that time, Will's only

contribution to comics was a *Tigra* one-shot for Marvel. Animation deadlines and assignments prevented Will from doing more than character sketches, and it wasn't until he co-created *The DNAgents* with Mark Evanier a few years later that he finally got the time to enter the comics field. We then turned to Tom Sutton, a wonderful artist who happened at the time to keep a whole slew of rats in his house as pets! After drawing about ten pages, Tom wasn't able to continue with the project, and we were fortunate enough to get Gene Colan, who among about a million other things drew many of the *Howard* stories. With the addition of Tom Palmer, we ended up with one of the finest art teams in the history of comics.

I'll let the story of the fifteen alternate endings for *Stewart* wait until Steve writes his memoirs. Suffice it to say, because much of Steve's work is autobiographical to one degree or another, Stewart underwent as many changes as did Steve during this period! And no, for those inquiring minds, I don't mean to say that Steve is Stewart, or vice versa, just that there are those writers who draw from experiences, and those who make things up out of whole cloth. Steve is definitely one of those based on Planet Earth, even if it is a unique version of the planet. As we put the final touches on *Stewart*, I enjoyed watching Steve standing over cover-colorist Glynis Oliver Wein and manically blow-drying her watercolor.

One of the real highlights of working with Steve, Gene, and Tom on *Stewart* was a visit Steve and I made to Gene and Adrienne Colan's house. I've always considered Gene a master of mood and facial expressions and I was very curious to discover what was hanging on his walls. I wasn't disappointed. I stepped into the foyer and was treated to charcoal sketches of Paris as Gene saw it when he was in the armed services. As I wandered through the house, my



An unpublished Stewart
the Rat panel by Tom Sutton.

eyes lit up over paintings, pastels, and drawings of neighborhood children, including Gene's own. This serene side of Gene Colan juxtaposed with his incredible interest in horror stories makes him one of the most fascinating people I've ever known. Incidentally, if you want to know where Gene dreamed up the diner from *Stewart the Rat*, take a ride down Route 9 in central New Jersey. I noticed the diner just before the cut-off for the house Gene was living in at the time.

Concurrent with *Stewart's* production, Don McGregor and Marshall Rogers were hard at work on *Detectives, Inc.* Although *Detectives, Inc.* was started after *Stewart*, it was released first, in July 1980, because of changing art teams on the rat book.

Don McGregor created *Detectives, Inc.* in the late 1960s, and that amateur comic he and his friend Alex Simmons wrote and drew was what first brought Don to the attention of Jim Warren, publisher of *Creepy*, *Eerie*, and *Vampirella*, and started Don on his professional comics career.

As with all of his books, Don did an incredible amount of research on *Detectives, Inc.* He travelled all over New York looking for locations, talking to private investigators, midwives...anyone who could be of help with regards to his plot involving murder, midwives, and Manhattan.

Don, Jan, and I were very fortunate to interest Marshall Rogers in the story. At the time, Marshall was the bright new star on the comics horizon, having completed a critically acclaimed run of Batman stories with Steve Englehart in *Detective Comics*. I always thought it an odd coincidence that Marshall went from detective to detective. Marshall's sense of research and obligation to the story was equal to Don's. In fact, Marshall was so dedicated that he often quipped that he had gotten so "into" the story he thought he was Don half the time.

Marshall's apartment building had a beautiful view of the George Washington Bridge and the Palisades in uptown Manhattan, and I went to talk over the book with him on many, many nights. One evening I got sidetracked, though. Driving up Broadway in Harlem, I noticed a large crowd waiting by the entrance of a rarely-used theatre. I looked up at the marquee which boasted "Reverend Ike Tonight," and I jerked my car on to a side street, jumped out, paid my money, and went in. It turned out to be one of the most outrageously entertaining experiences I've ever had. I'd seen Reverend Ike on TV before, but he was just sensational in person. I never liked Jimmy Lee Swaggart, or Billy Graham, or any of those other guys. But Reverend Ike was different. I mean, any "preacher" who says "God wants me to have a Cadillac, so pass the hat, brother," at least has an incredible sense of humor. I didn't put any money in the hat, but the couple of bucks price at the door certainly provided as much entertainment as *Sleeping Beauty* downtown, if not more!

I eventually made it to Marshall's that evening, we had our *Detectives, Inc.* conference, and not long thereafter, the book was completed. We planned to premiere *Detectives, Inc.* at the July 4th Chicago Comics Convention. In order to accommodate Don and Marsha McGregor, many boxes of freshly printed *Detectives, Inc.* graphic novels, and two friends of mine, I rented a bigger car and we set out for the Great Middle West. I know what happened to us, but I wonder what ever happened to Reverend Ike. Maybe he got enough donations to buy himself an island in the Caribbean!

Next issue: Will Don and I and a carload of Detectives, Inc. make the 1,000 mile trip in time for the Chicago Con? Or will Detectives, Inc.'s premiere start without us?!

WHO'S WHO IN TOTAL ECLIPSE



Tachyon

Transferred to our universe by the Corporation, this super-powered alien found acceptance in the New Wave.

Always in it for the money, Nicholas Walcek robbed banks using his power to negate friction, until he was remanded to The Liberty Project.

Slick



Avalon

A high school student, Elizabeth Lane is the reluctant heir to druidic powers. Her father, Professor Holmes, brought Tachyon to Earth.

Rosalita Vasquez has the strength of a mule and the temper to match. The Project was the perfect place for her.

Cimarron



Dot

A sometime freelance government operative, this industrial spy helped rescue the New Wave and Professor Holmes from the Corporation.

Repentent criminal Lee Clayton's scientific genius and perfect aim make him a valued Project member.

Crackshot



Polestar

A circus acrobat, Morgan accidentally become embroiled in Dot's spying activities and joined the New Wave.

Beatrice Keogh's ability to control heat and flame made her a nasty problem in school—and a prime Liberty Project candidate.

Burnout



Impulse

Daniel Barkin kept his telekinetic abilities a secret until he joined the New Wave with his girlfriend Avalon.

No one in the New Wave knows that the Corporation transforms unwanted handicapped people into robots.

Megabyte



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Nightmares

They haunt the uneasy sleep of the immortal Zzed, feeding him the doomsday plan that will put an end to his life...and the universe. In his dreams, Zzed learns of hidden laboratories, ancient Aztec gems, and alien beings of enormous power.

From his dreaded limbo, the being known as Misery watches with growing concern as Zzed's plans take shape. To save himself, Misery must call upon the help of his most hated enemies—the Airfighters.

The battle is begun.

But the heroes and heroines of Earth face a threat far more powerful than they yet realize. Zzed may be the master of his dreams, or merely a pawn in a far larger game of destruction. With each passing moment, his nightmares come closer to fruition. And billions of lives hang in the balance.

Total Eclipse

It's Eclipse Comics' Tenth Anniversary. In this and future issues, you'll encounter Airboy, Valkyrie, Skywolf, Miracleman, The Prowler, Strike, the Heap, Aztec Ace and virtually every star from Eclipse's first decade of innovative comics publishing.

Marv Wolfman, writer, is the author of *The New Teen Titans*, *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, *Tomb of Dracula*, and countless other acclaimed comic books. The Zzed saga is his most intricate plot to date.

Bo Hampton, pencil artist, is well-known for his detailed linework and powerful layouts in books such as *Airboy*, *Lost Planet*, *Luger*, and *The New Mutants*. *Total Eclipse* is a new peak in his artistic development.

Will Blyberg, ink artist, has used his eye for texture, shadow, and depth on *Valkyrie!*, *Airboy*, *DNAGents*, and others. His flawless execution breathes added life into this epic adventure.

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